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THREE TIMES A MONTH

Adventure

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Gordon MacCreagh
Nevil Henshaw
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Charles Beadle
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H. C. Bailey
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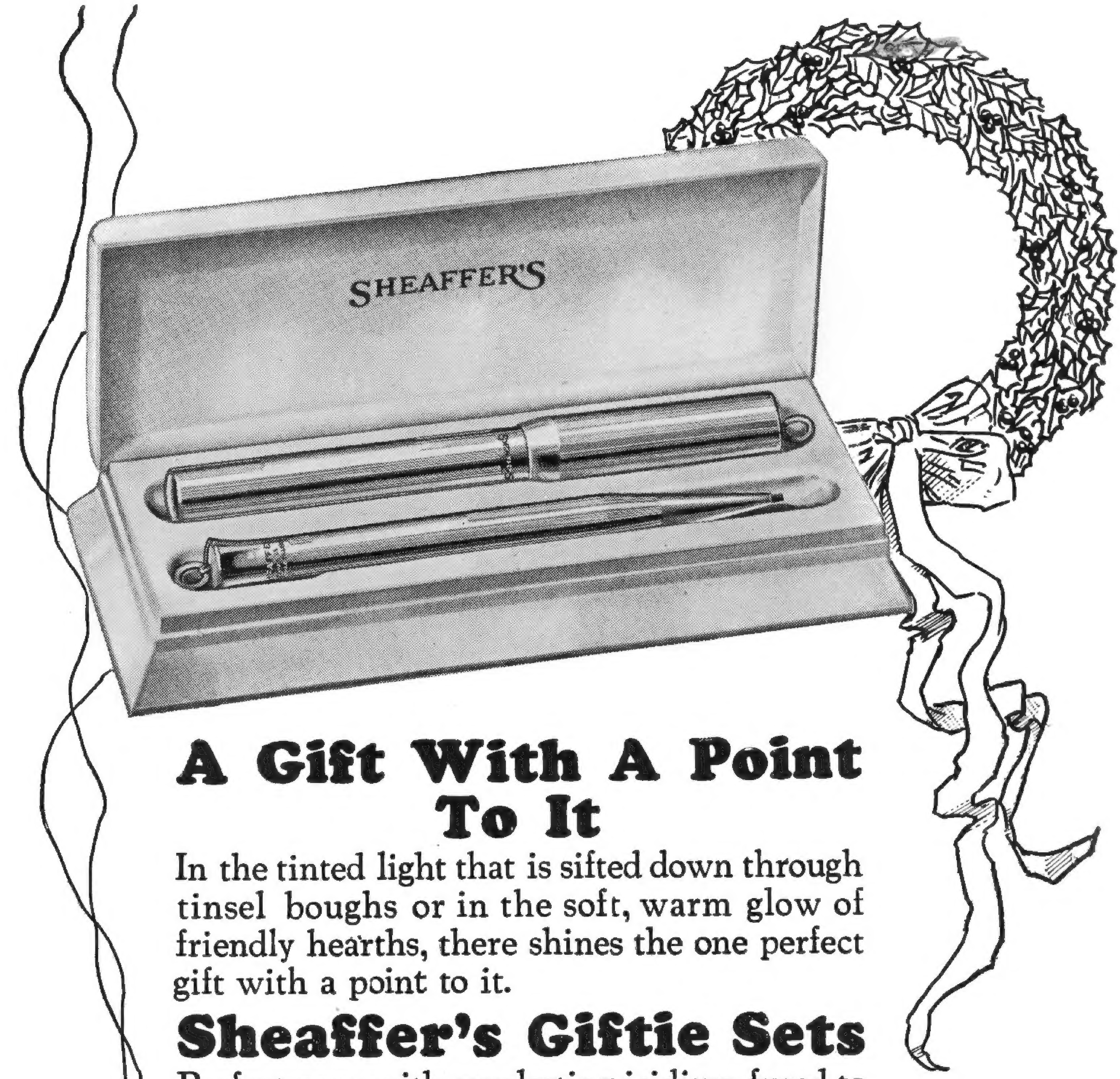

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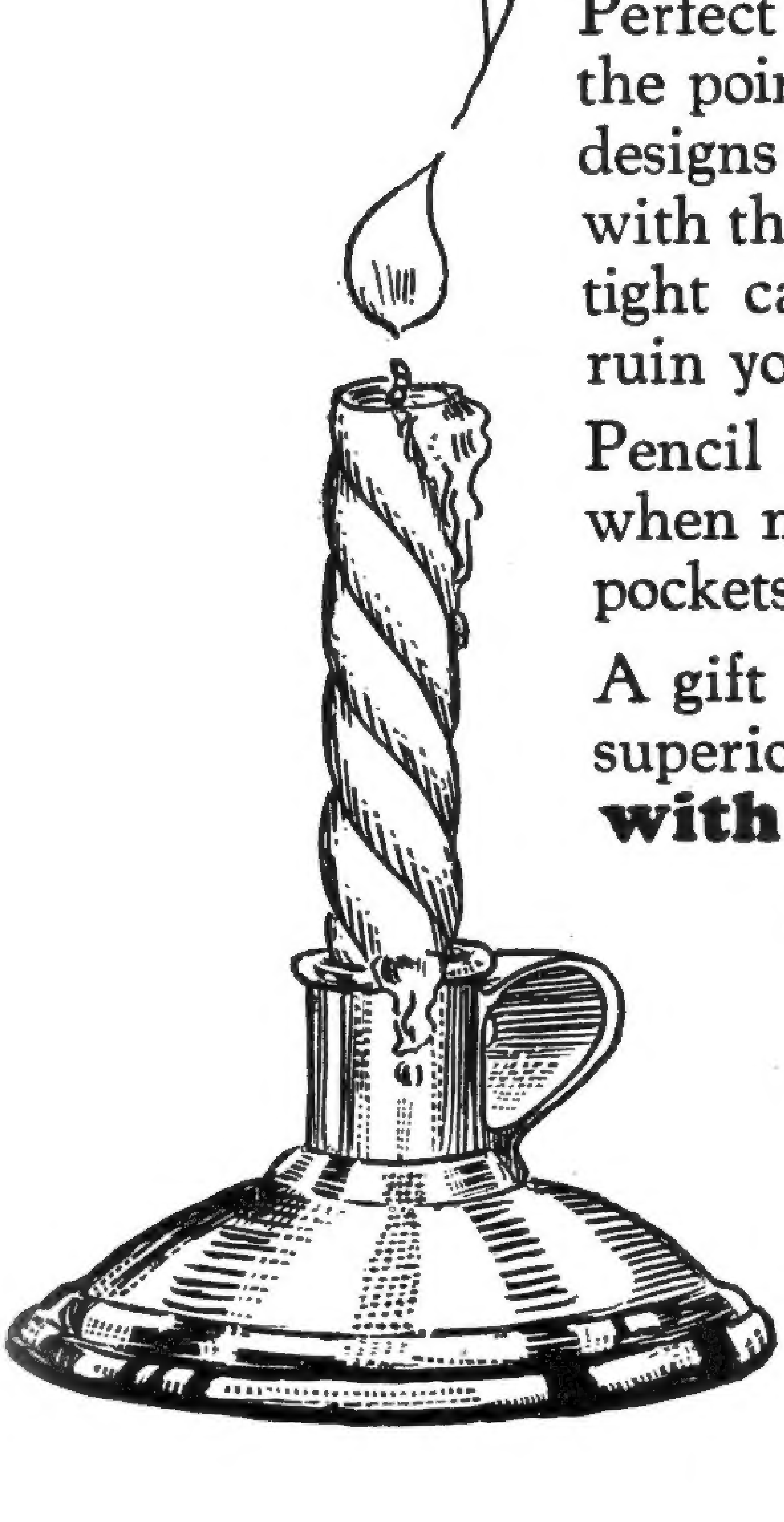

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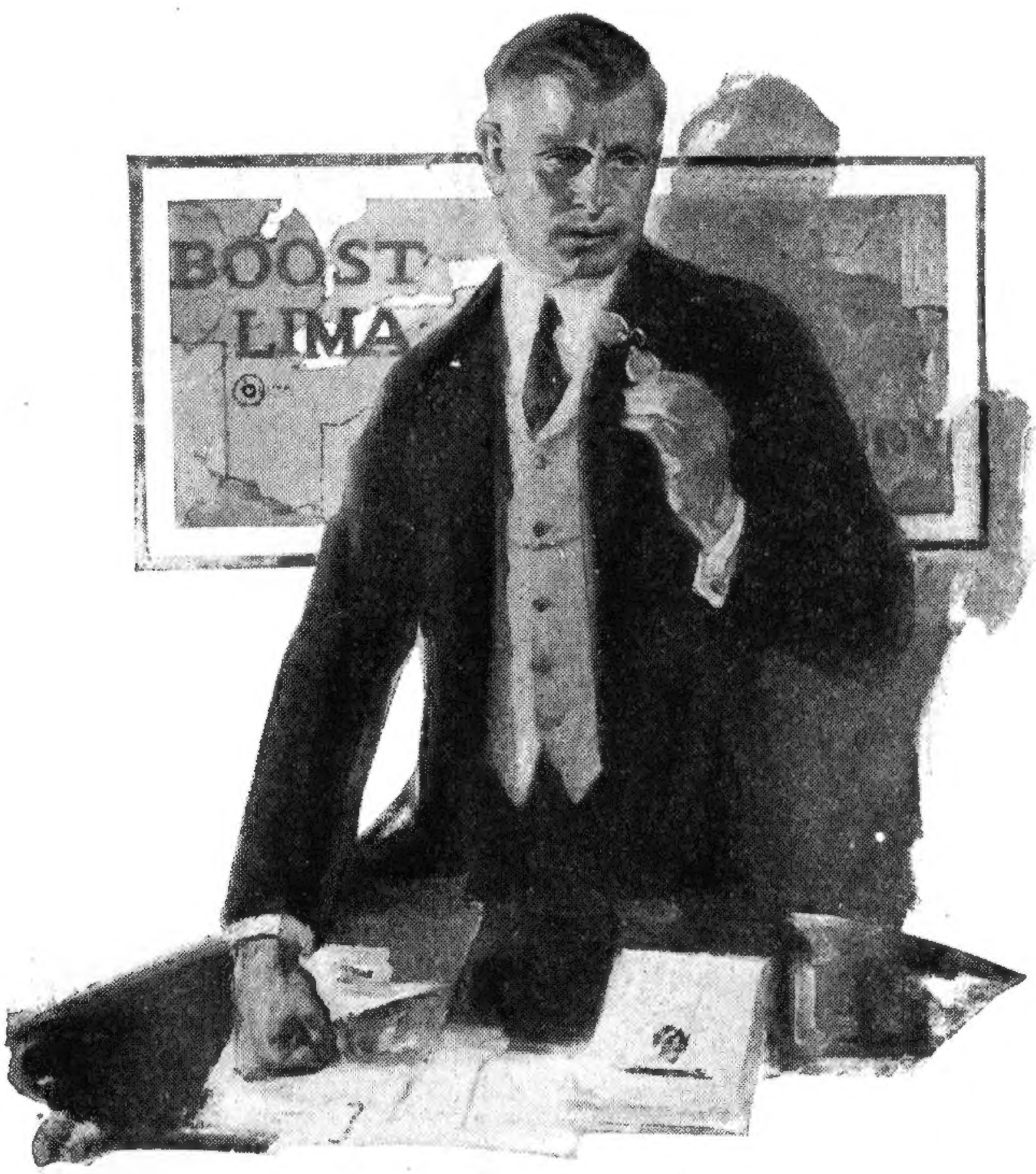

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Dec. 20th, 1924

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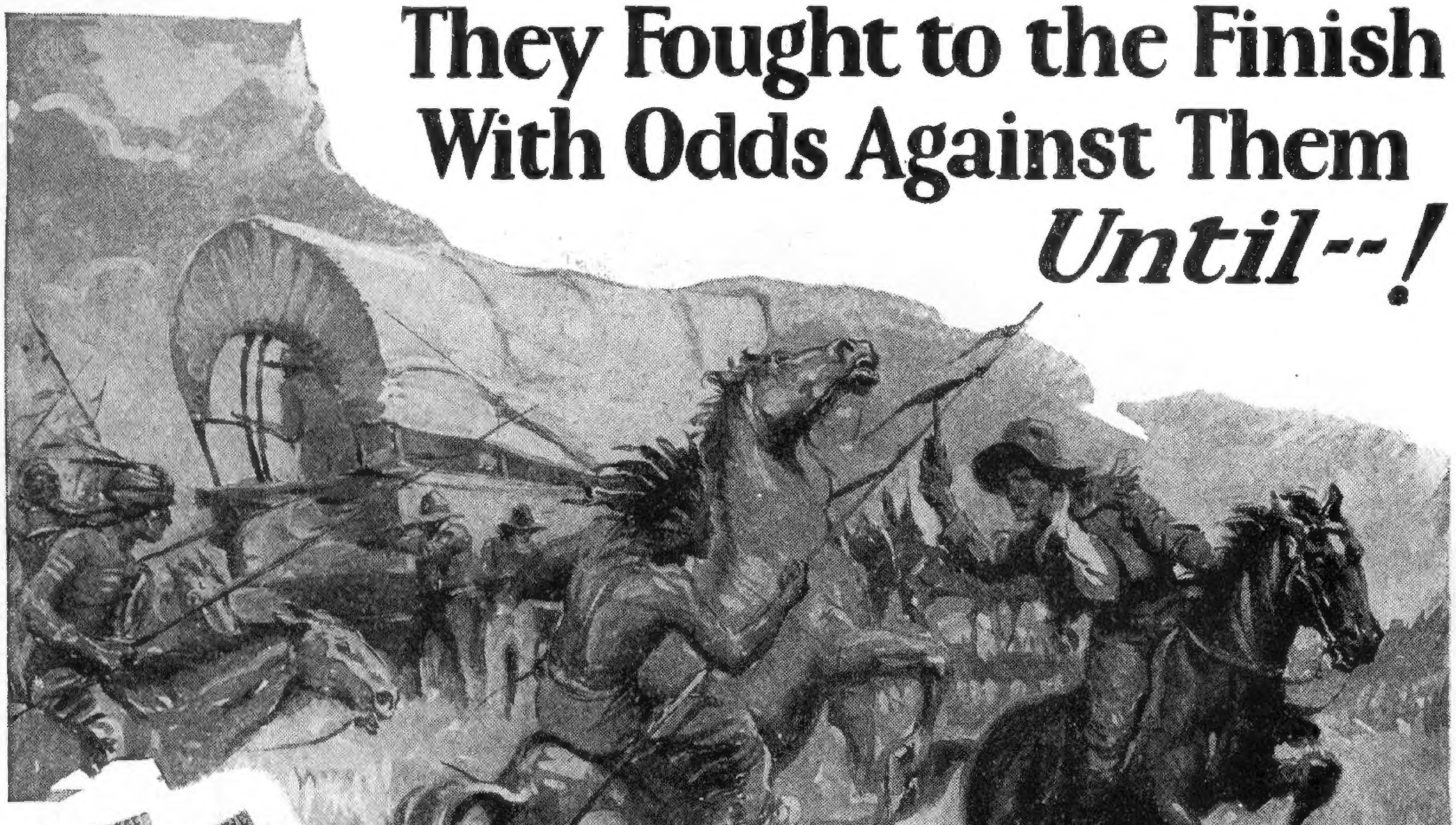

SKY HIGH CORRAL
RALPH CUMMINS
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W.C. TUTTLE
LOADED DICE
EDWIN L. SABIN
SONTAG OF SUNDOWN
W.C. TUTTLE
THE DEVIL'S PAYDAY
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DECEMBER 20, 1924
Vol. L, No. 2

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The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Headings . . . . **Walter H. Vanderburgh**

Cover Design . . . . **Paul Remmy**

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of *Adventure*, published three times a month at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1924. State of New York, County of New York, *ss.* Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Arthur S. Hoffman, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Editor of the *Adventure* and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, The Ridgway Company, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. Editor, Arthur Sullivant Hoffman, 223 Spring Street New York City. Managing Editor, none. Business Manager, James F. Birmingham, 223 Spring Street, New York City. 2. That the owner is: (If the publication is owned by an individual his name and address, or if owned by more than one individual the name and address of each, should be given below; if the publication is owned by a corporation the name of the corporation and the names and addresses of the stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of the total amount of stock should be given.) *Owner:* The Ridgway Company, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. *Stockholders:* Federal Publishing Company, a corporation, 15 Exchange Place, Jersey City, N. J., stockholder of Federal Publishing Company; The Butterick Company, a corporation, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City; stockholders of Butterick Company; George B. Black, 812 Lincoln Avenue, Mendota Ill.; S. R. Latshaw, Butterick Building, New York City; Laura J. O'Loughlin, 514 West 114th Street, New York City; Mrs. Arethusa Pond, 575 Riverside Drive, New York City; Abby L. Wilder, 43 Fifth Avenue, New York City; B. F. Wilder, Butterick Building, New York City; C. D. Wilder, Butterick Building, New York City; G. W. Wilder, Butterick Building, New York City. 3. *That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.)* None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. 5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is (This information is required from daily publications only.) Arthur S. Hoffman, Editor. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of September, 1924. Wm. Dewar, Jr., Notary Public. Kings Co. Clerk No. 154; Kings County Register No. 6159. New York County Clerk No. 400; New York County Register No. 6294.) (*My commission expires March* 30, 1926.) (Seal.) Form 3526—Ed. 1923.

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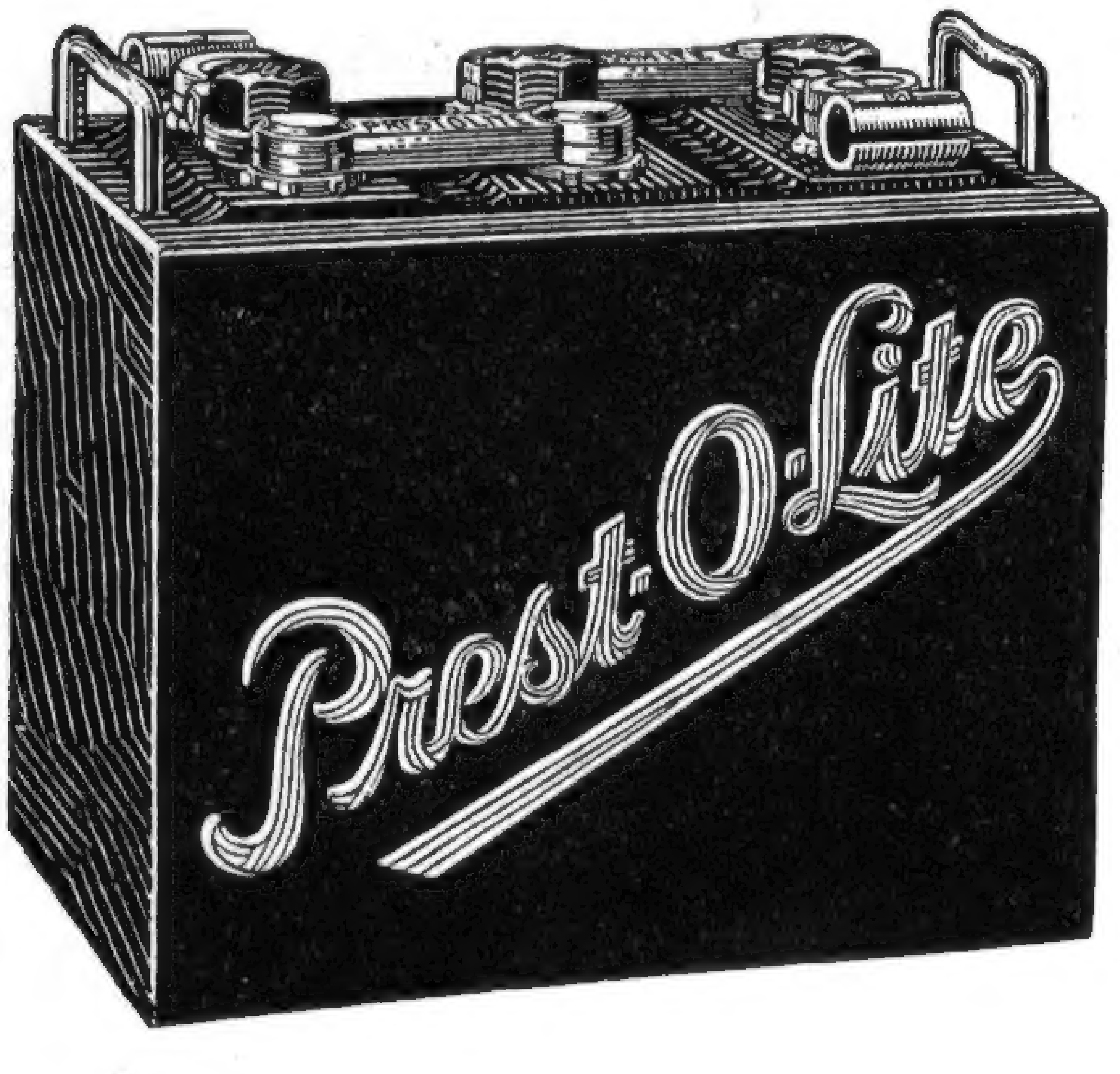

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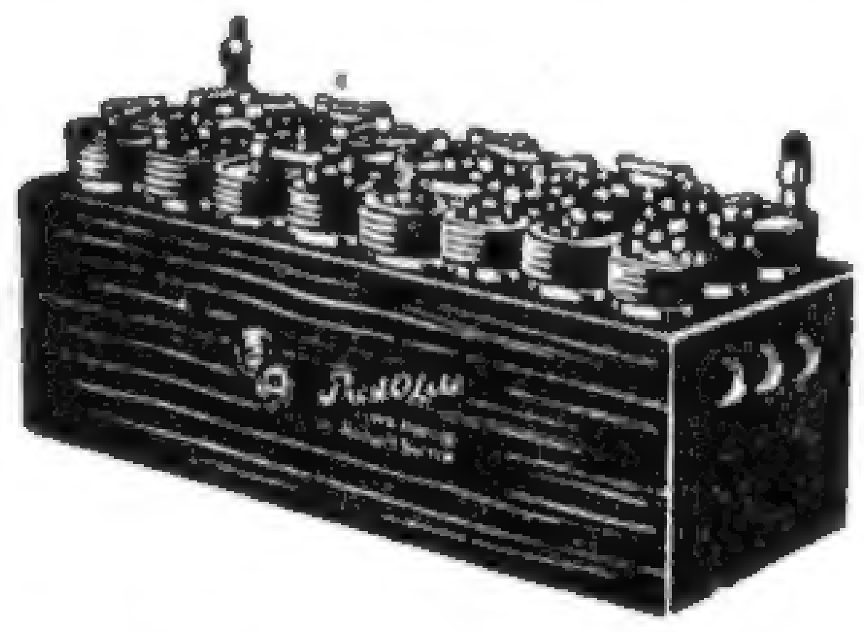

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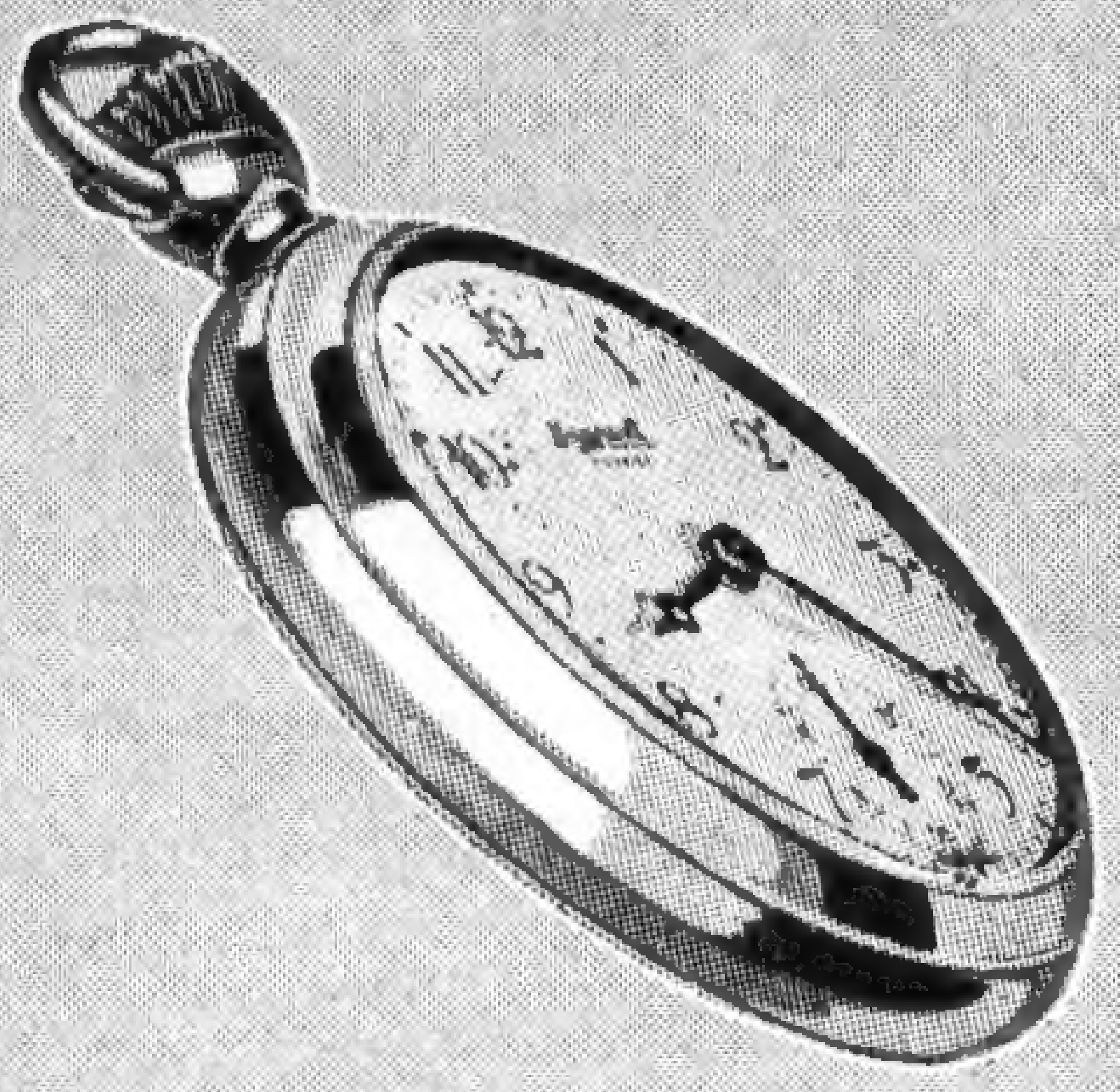

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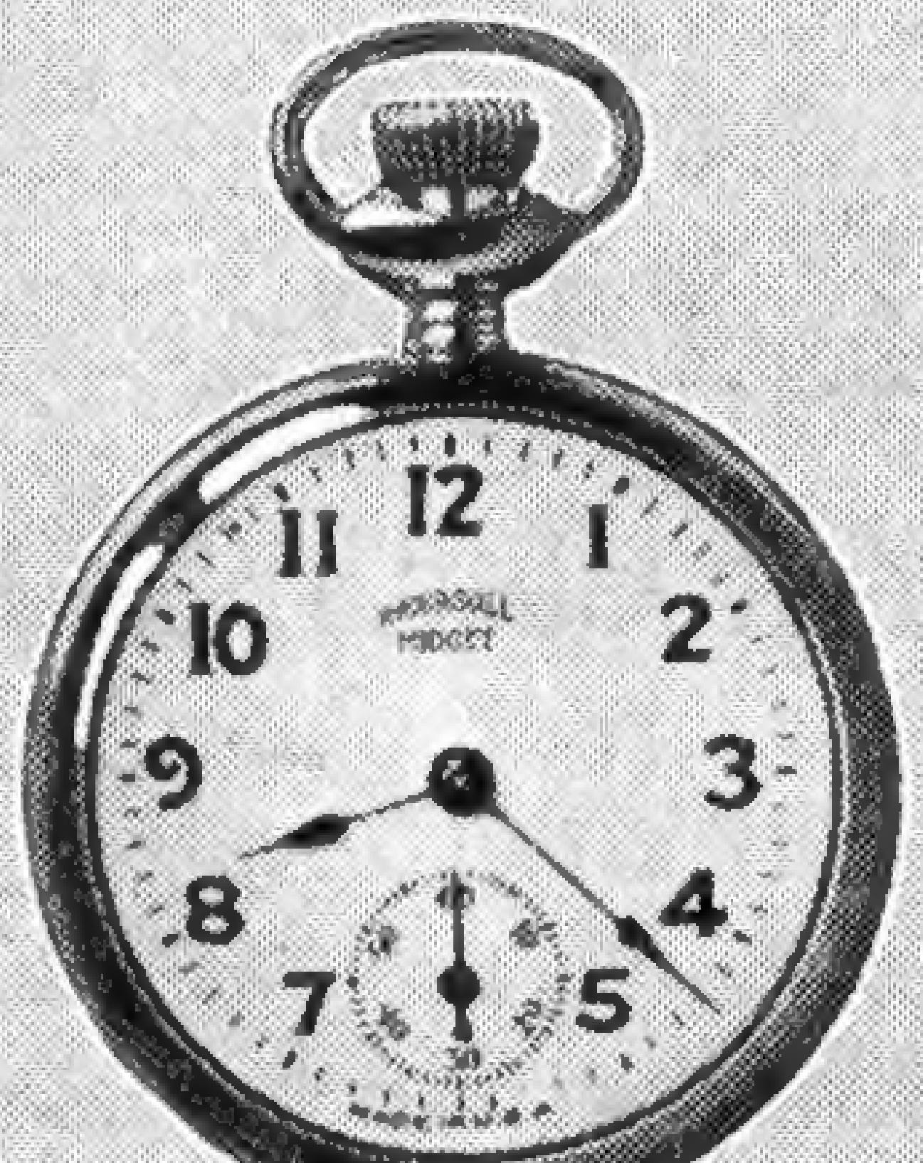

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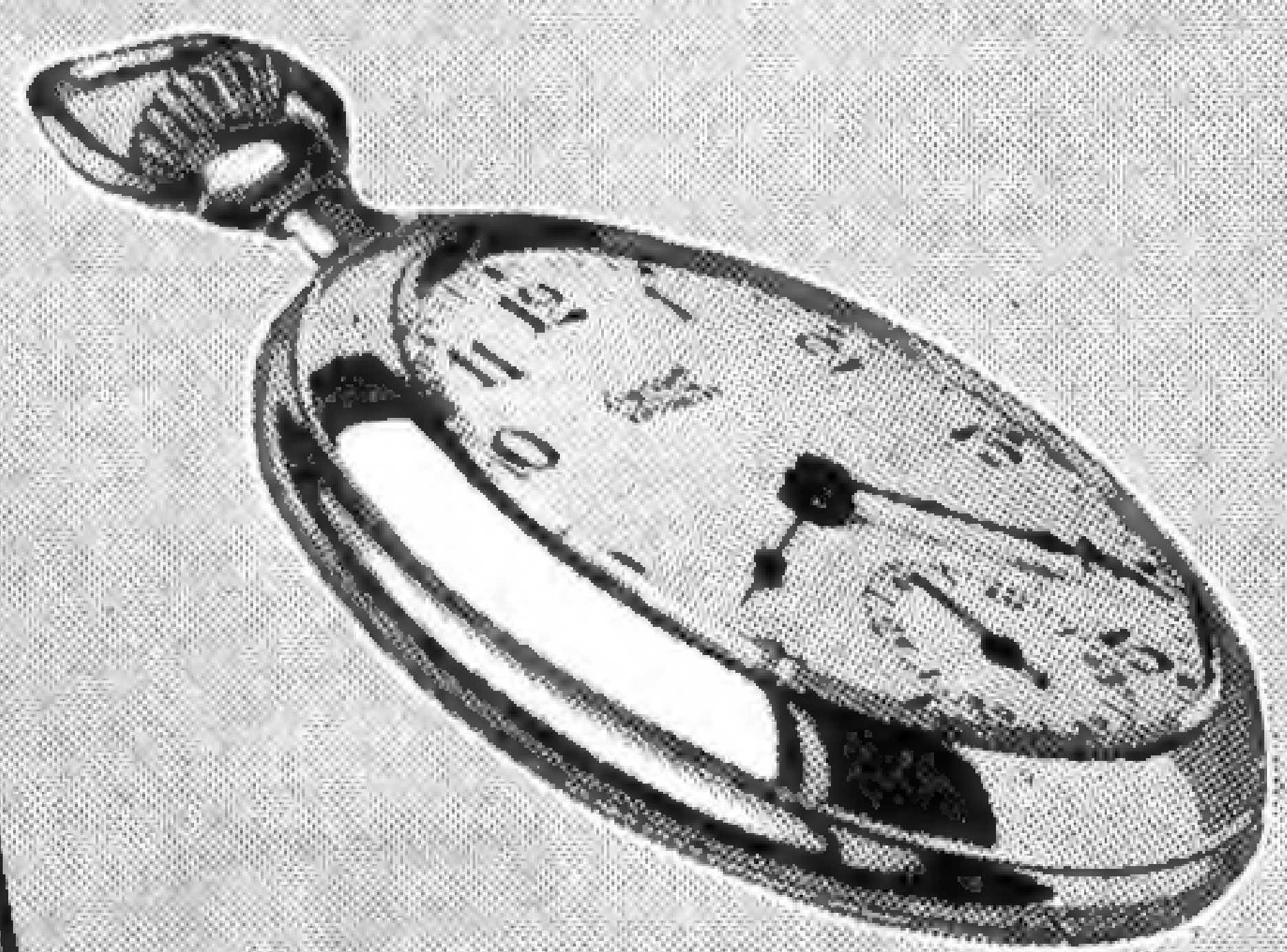

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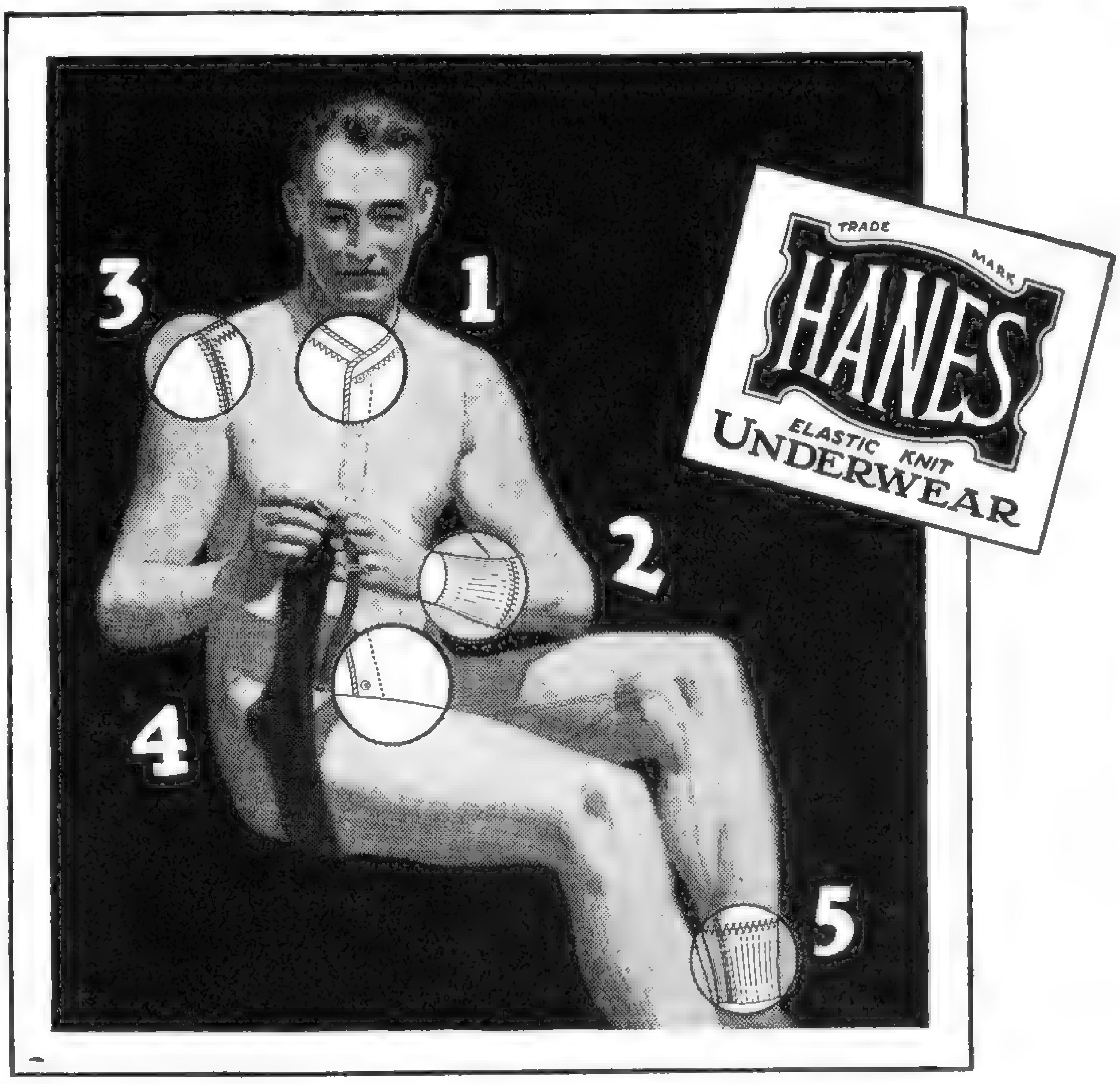

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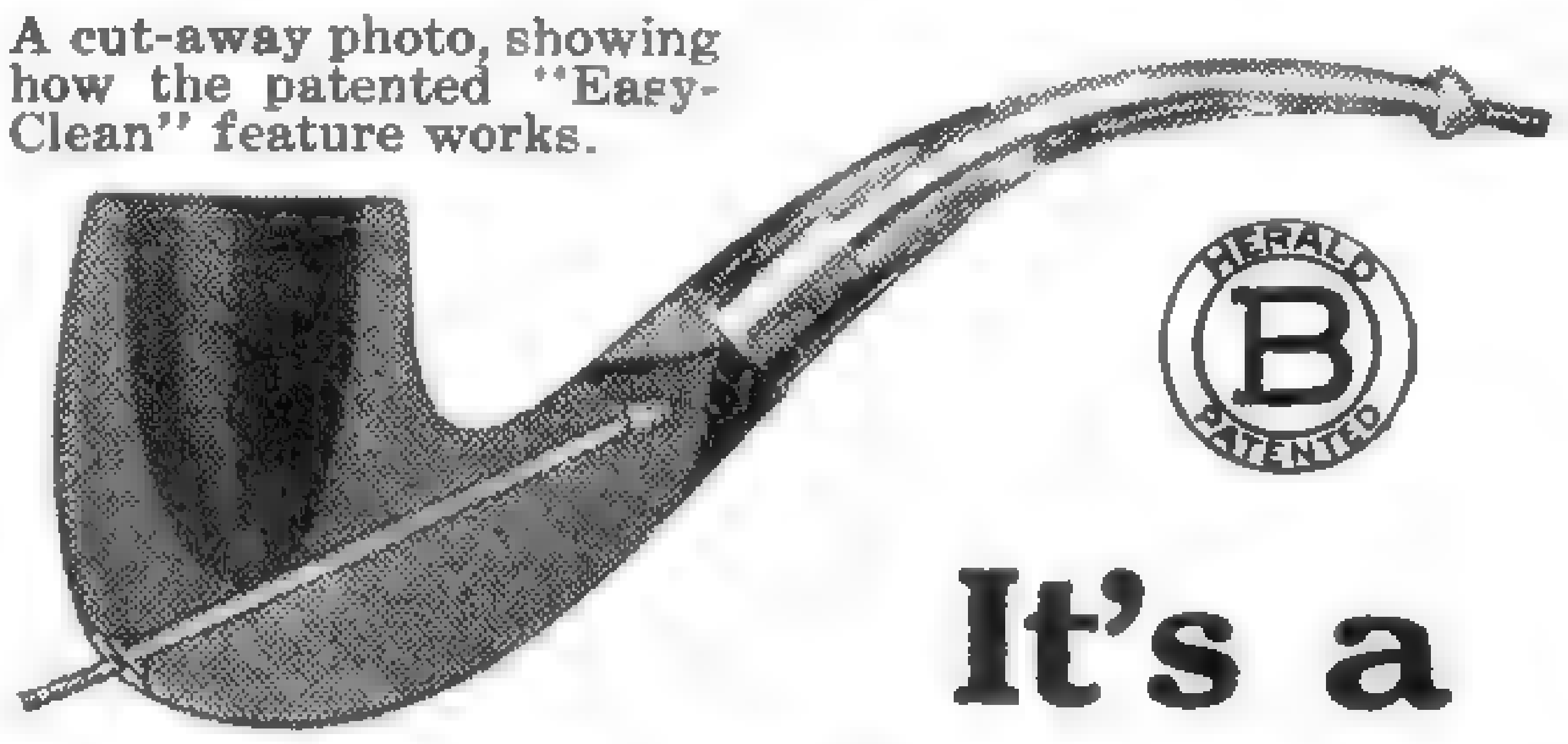
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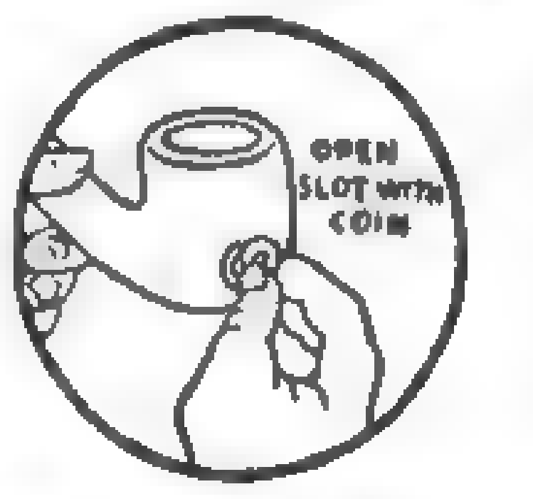

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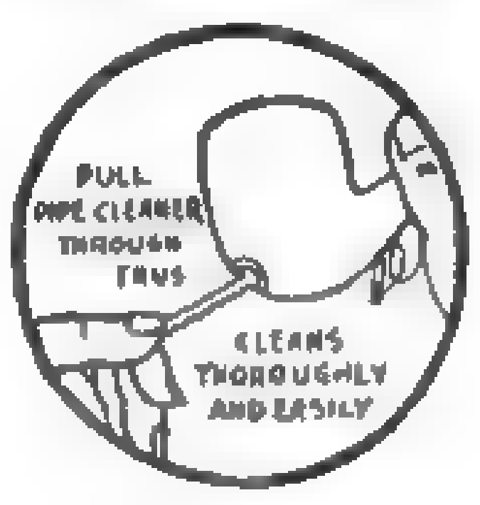
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CLEANS THOROUGHLY AND EASILY

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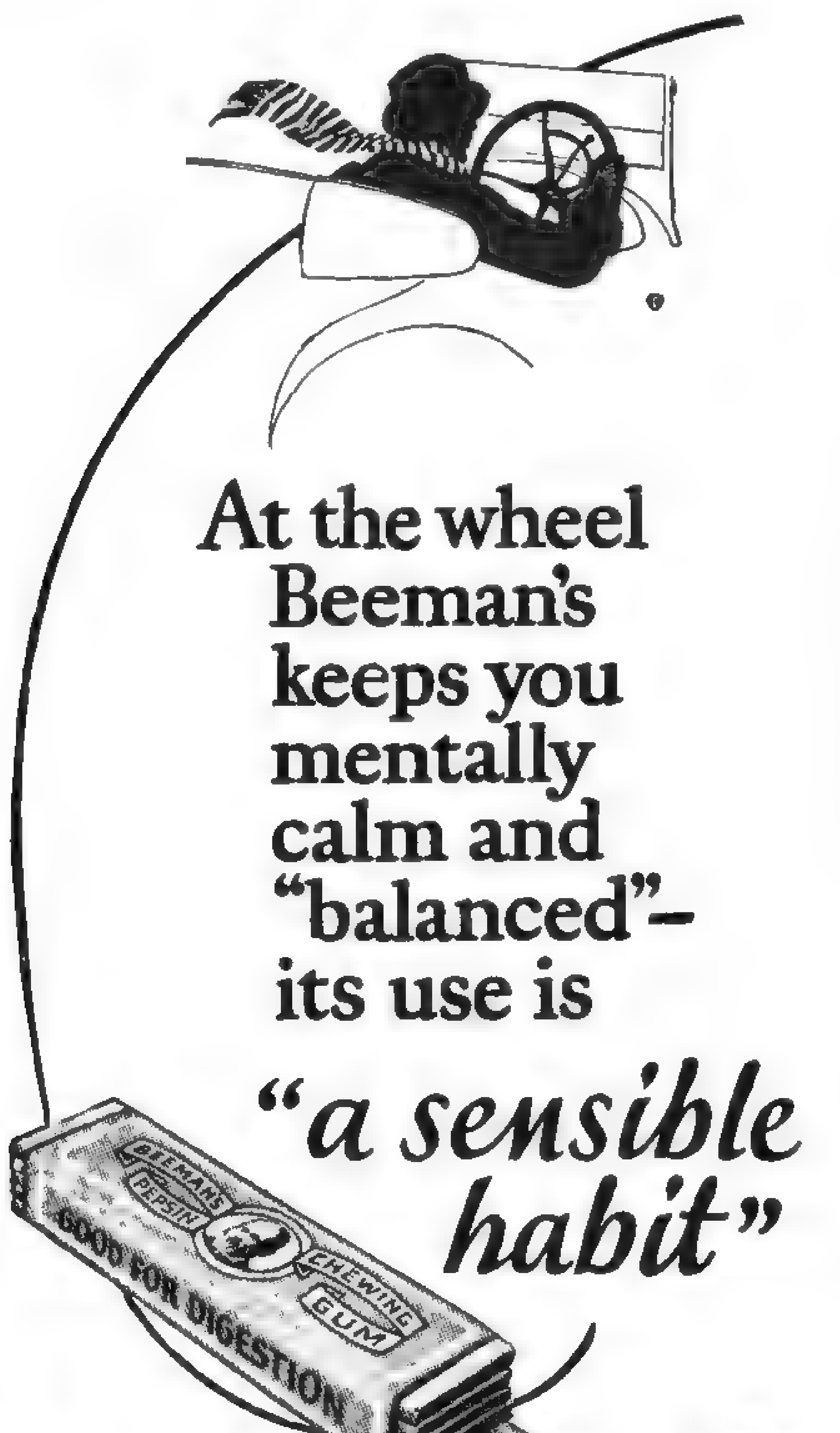

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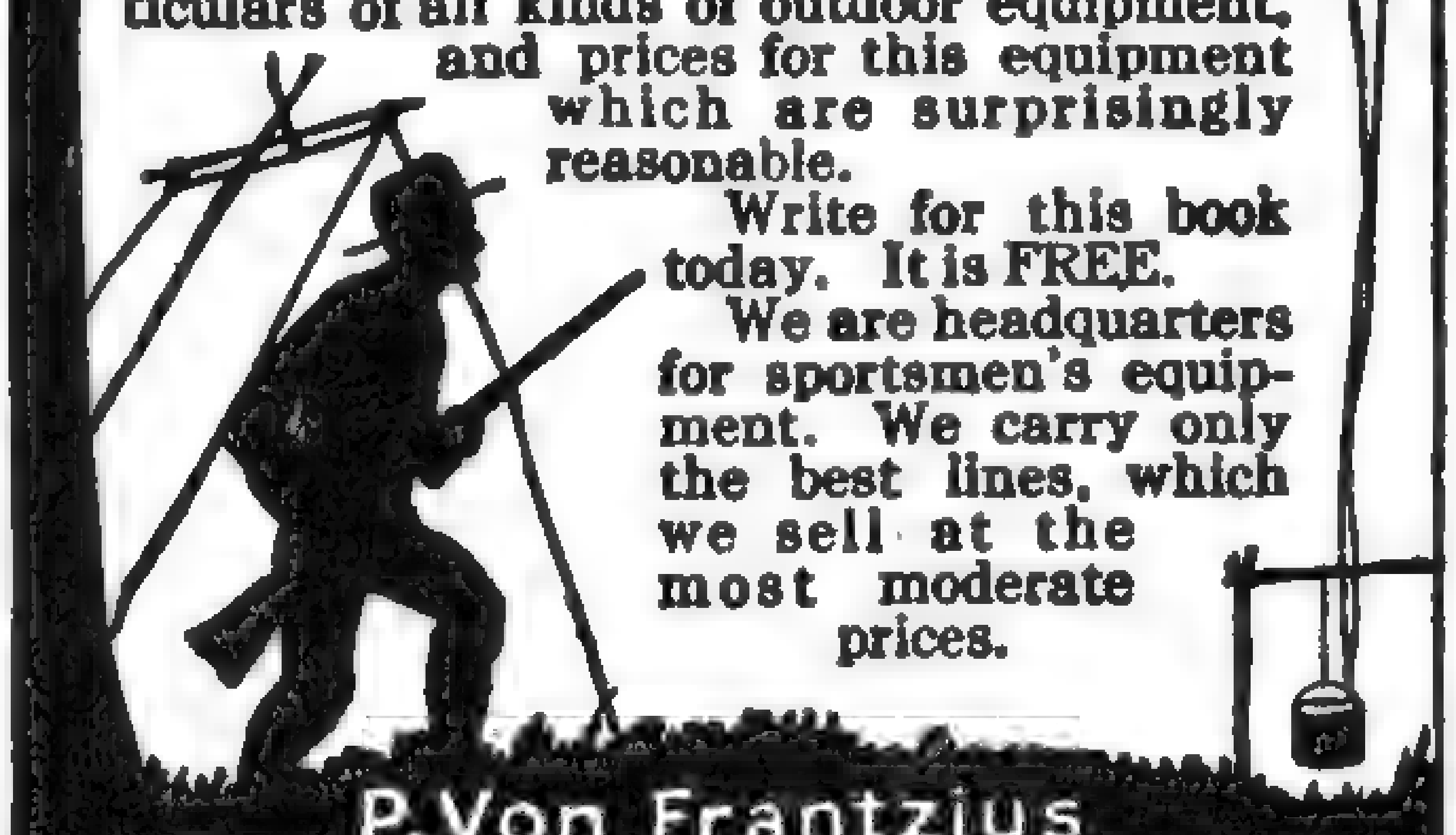

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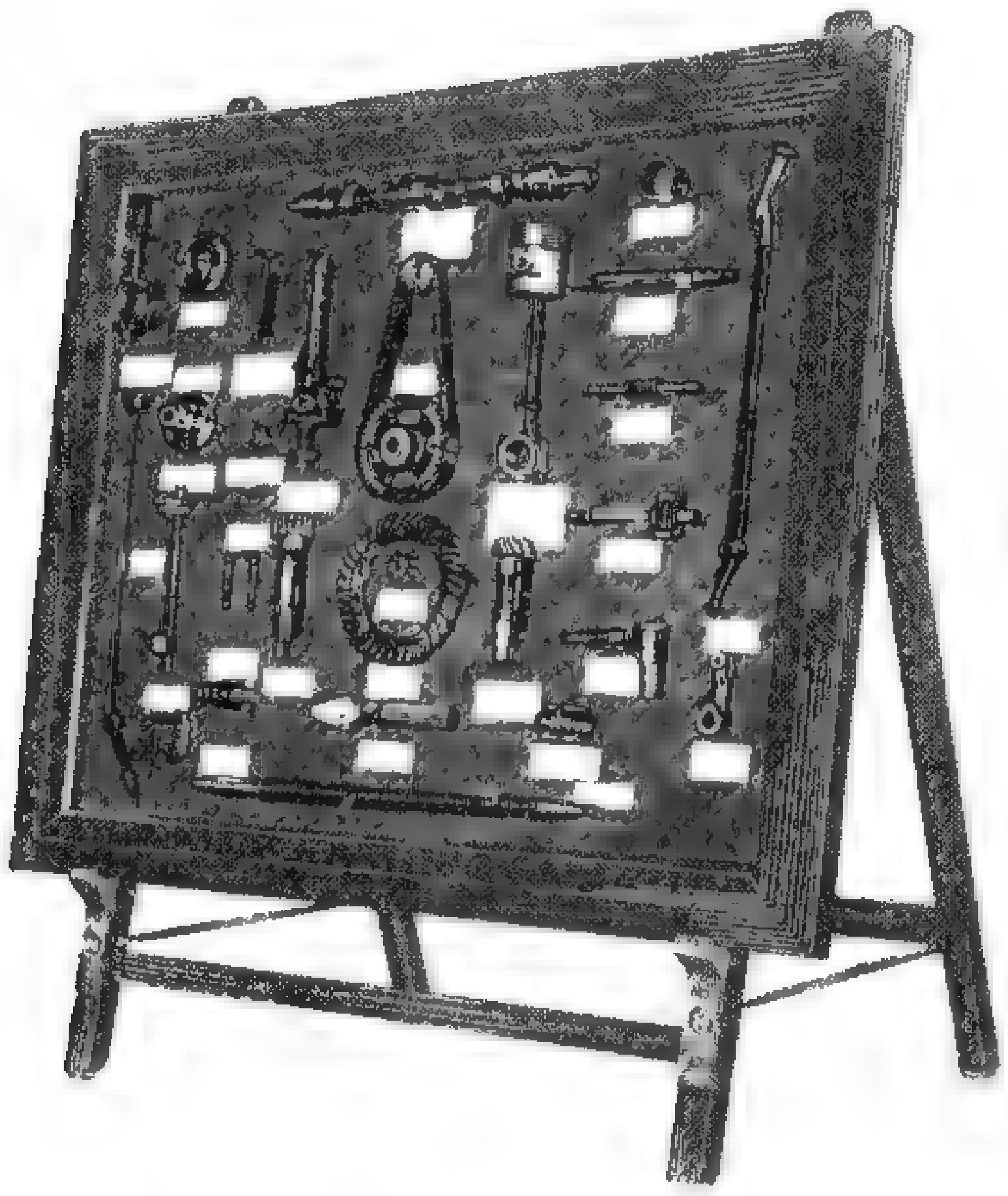

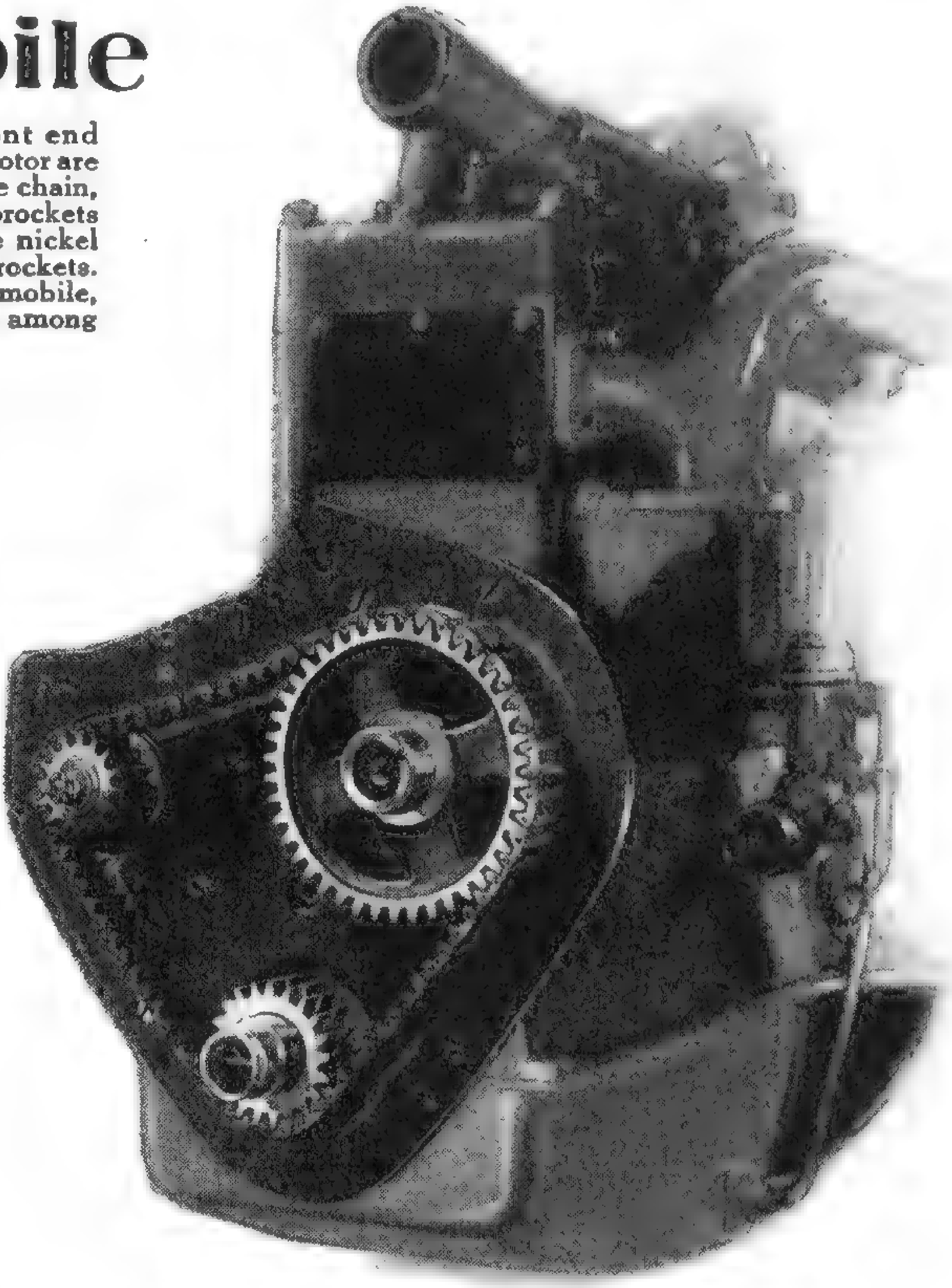

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The vital importance of the Hupmobile parts display, lies in the fact that it spreads before you, not a series of sales points, but the cold-steel facts.

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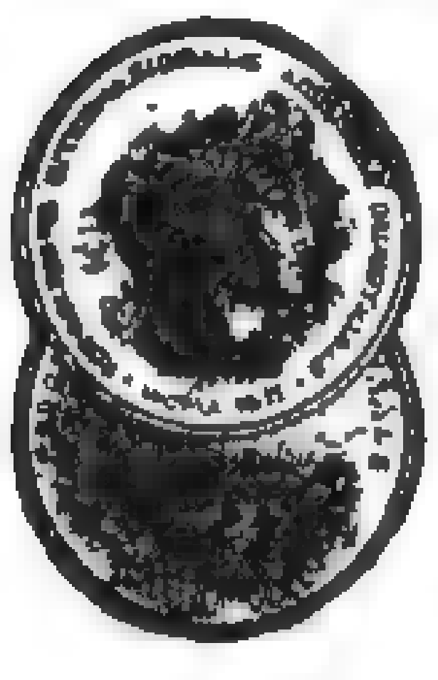
Stop Using a Truss



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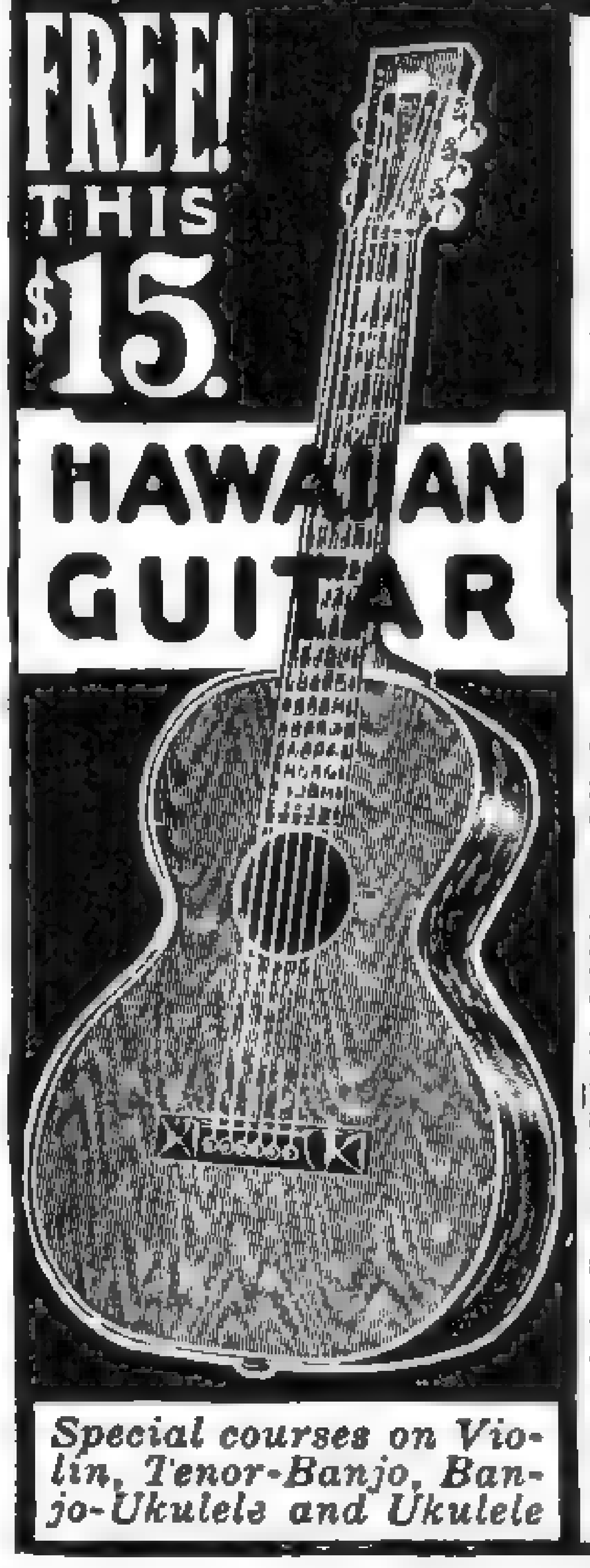

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2. The pick of America's Wheat—contains 25% Natural Bran, with essential Vitamines and Mineral Salts.
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WHOLE WHEAT CEREAL

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What the New Pettijohn's is—the New Pettijohn's is the finest of America's Whole Wheat, containing 25% Natural Bran. It is pre-cooked, processed to bring out the flavor, rolled and delicately toasted.

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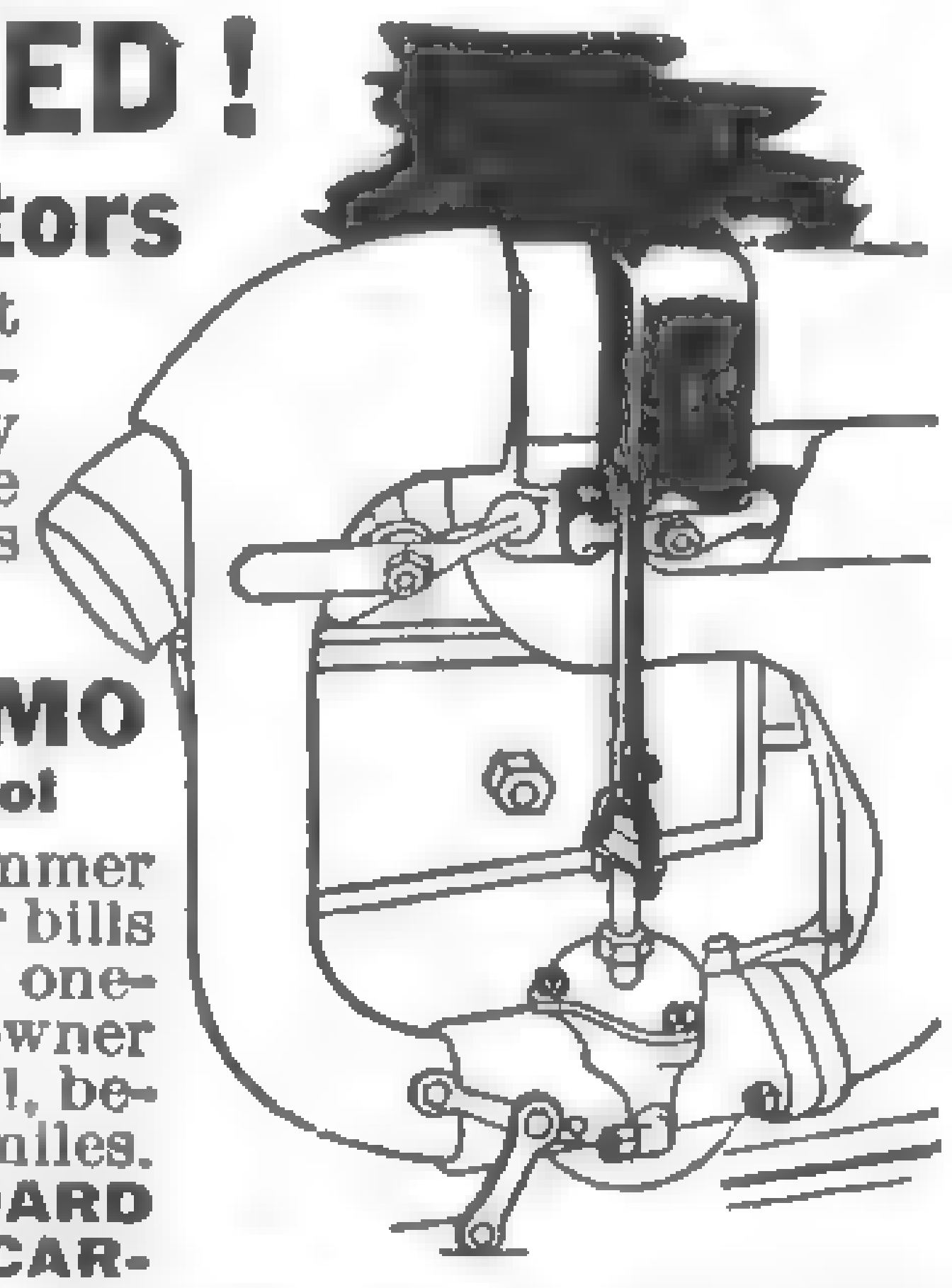

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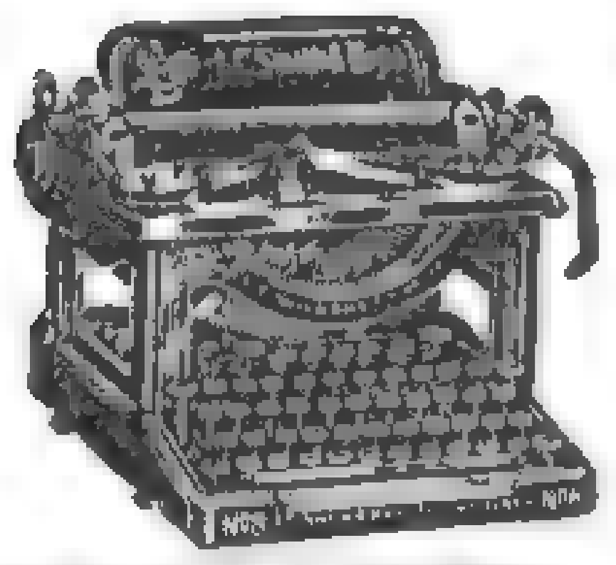

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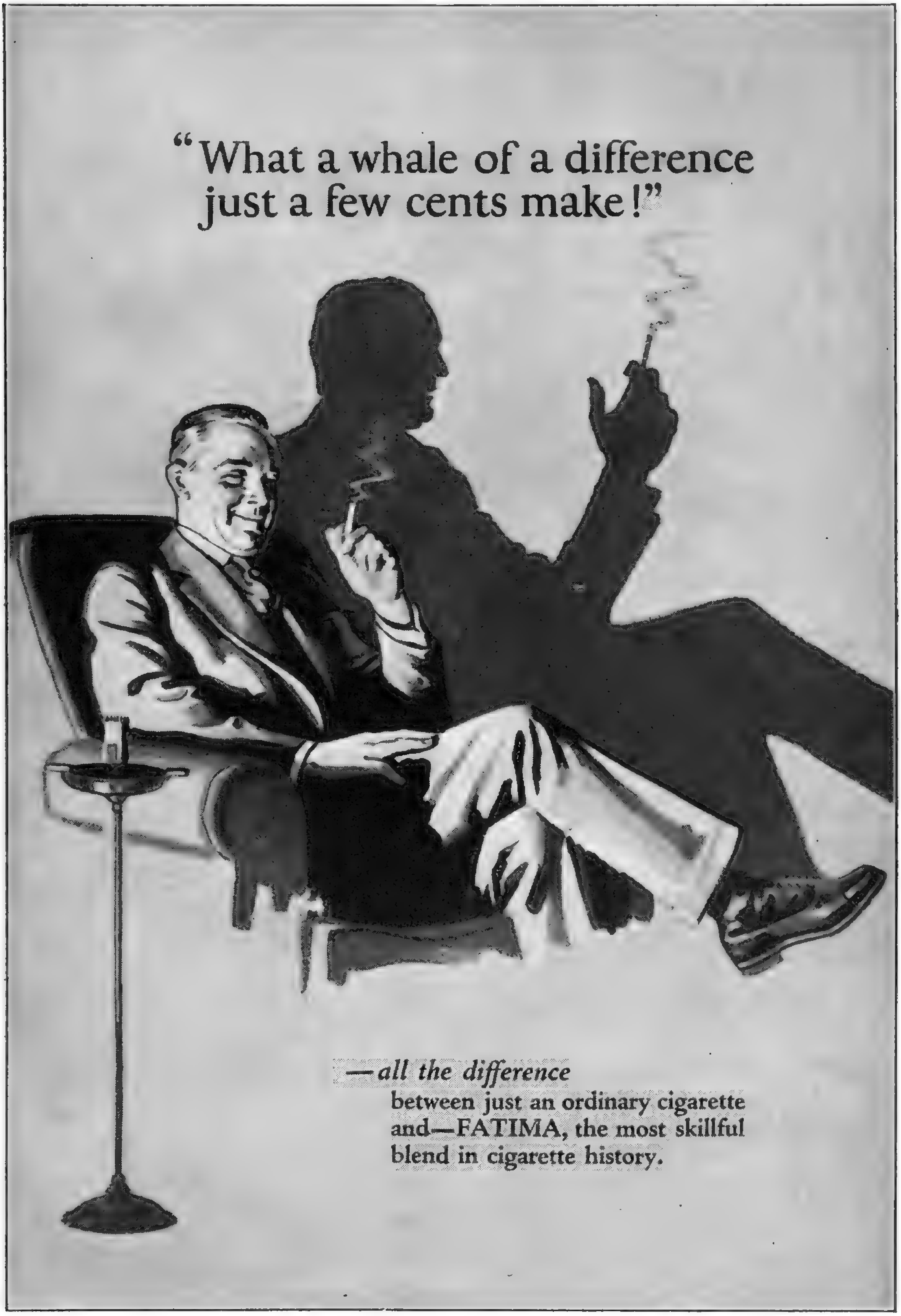

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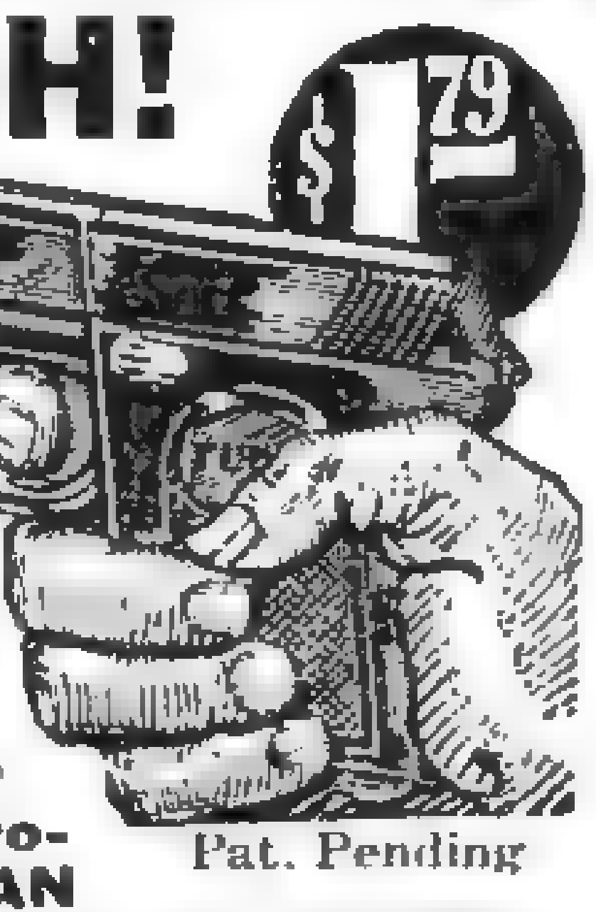

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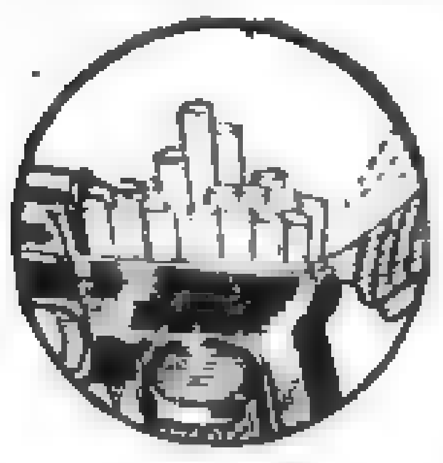

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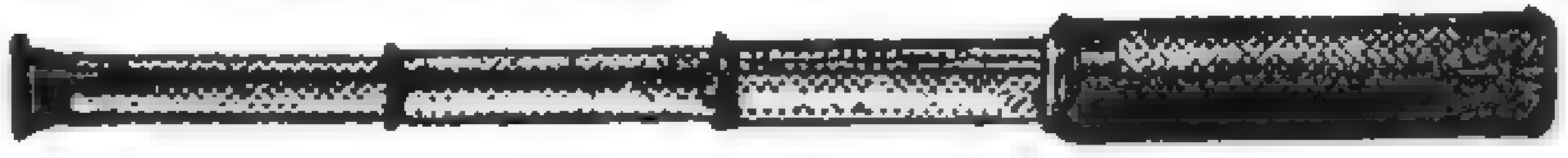

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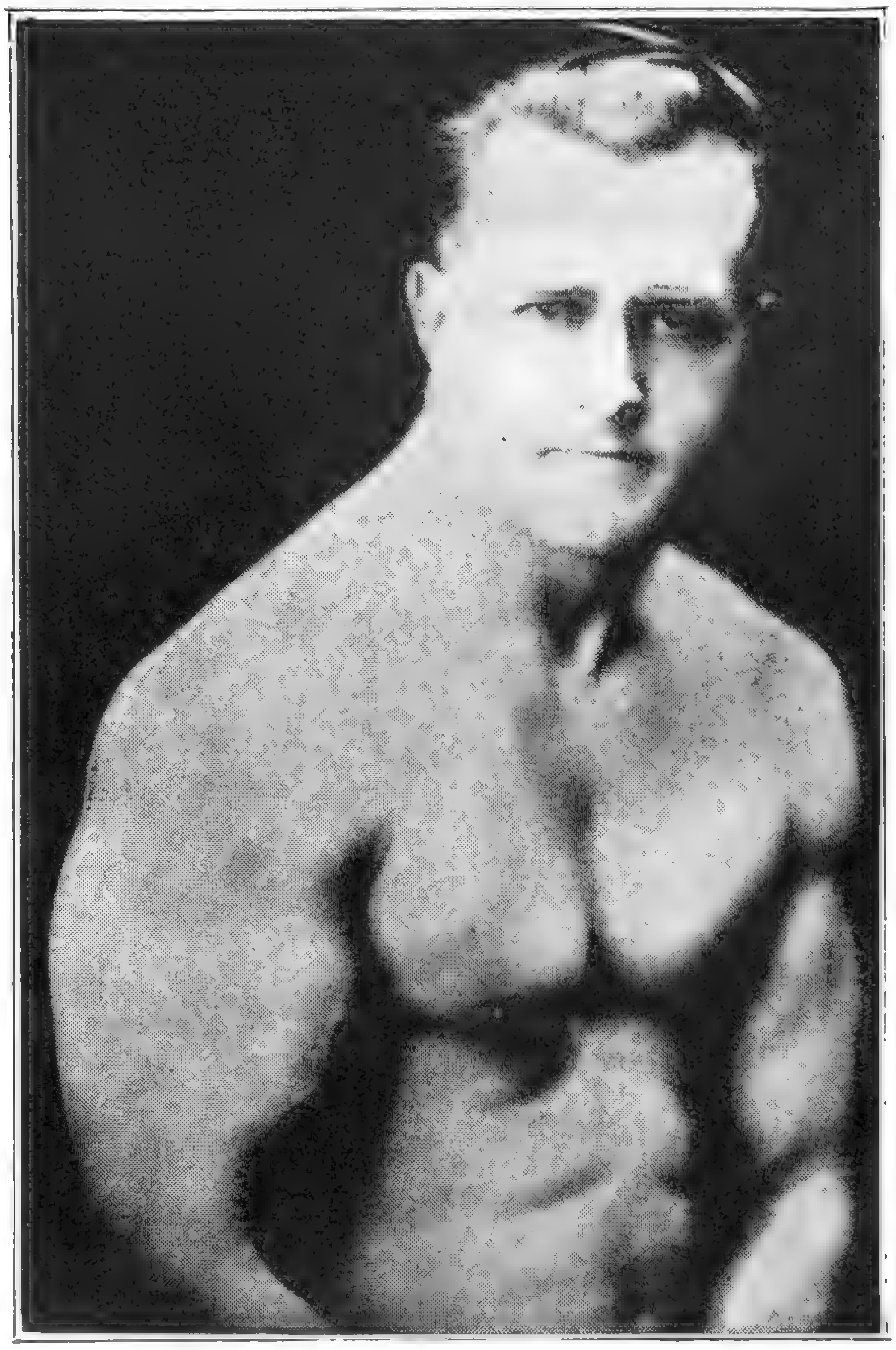

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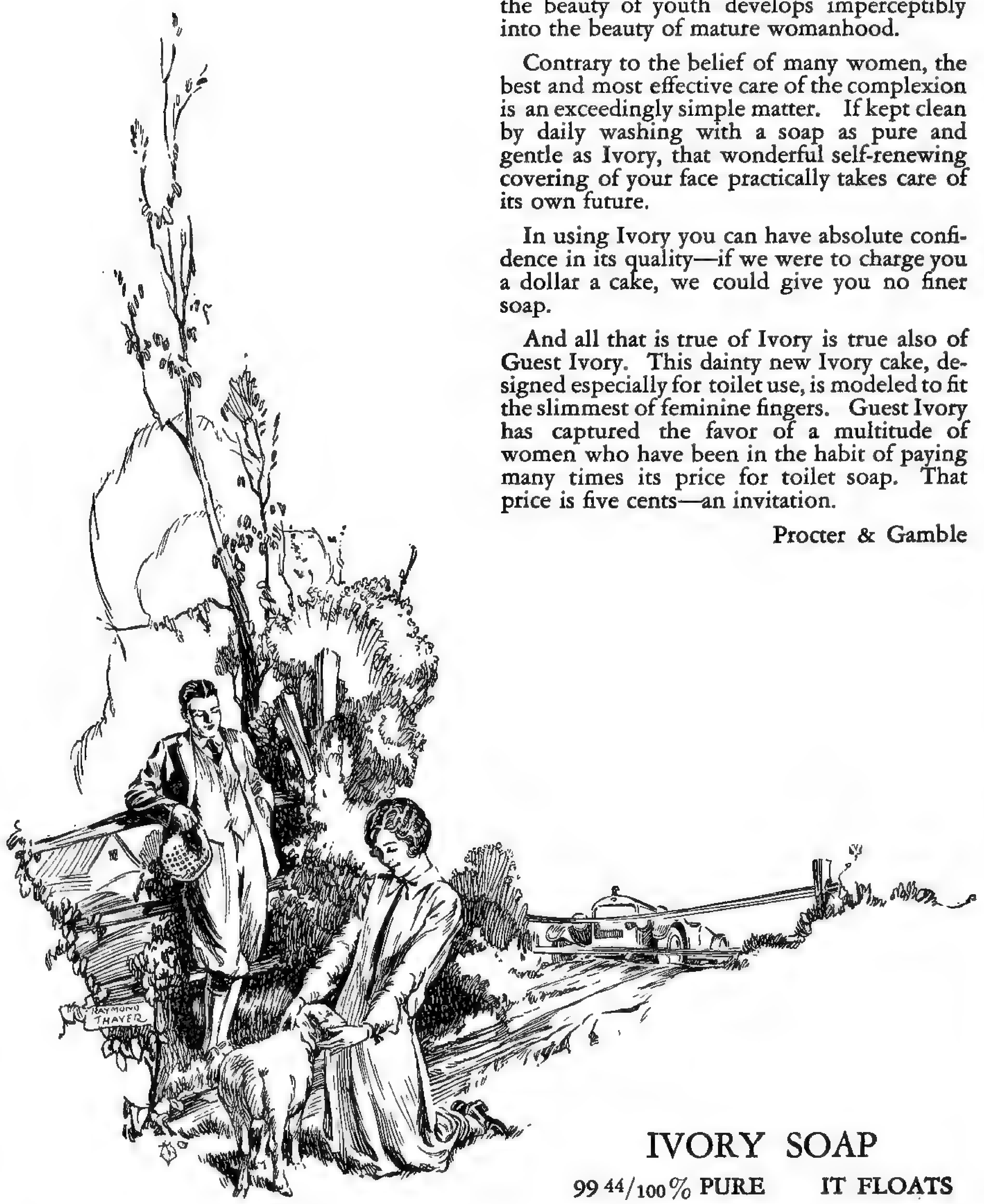

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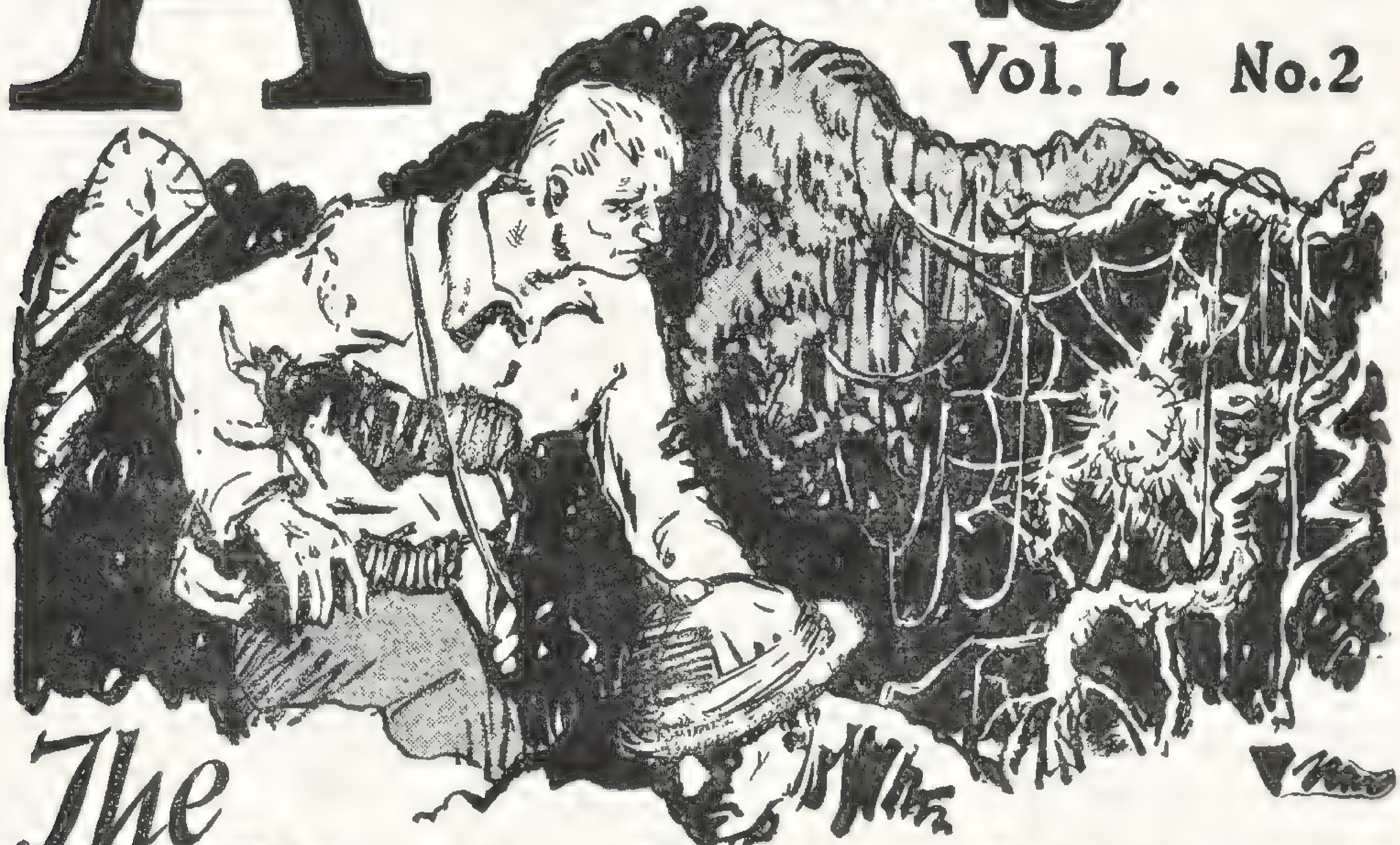

The Blond Spiders

A Complete Novelette by CHARLES BEADLE

Author of "The Lost Cure," "The Land of Ophir," etc.

"Nine little pussyfooters sitting on a knoll!
Singing songs of hate!
One drank to —— with Vol!
Then there were eight!"

IN THE hot, twittering East African heat even the raucous birds and a shrilling cricket stopped politely to listen to the strange song of the white man. The vocalist, lying beneath a giant Mbuli tree, sighed contentedly and began anew:

"Eight little pussyfooters staggering down the street!
Chanting psalms to Heaven!
One swigged synthetic gin!
Then there were seven!"

"Aw, quit it, Tony! You give a man the willies!" bawled a voice from within a green tent.

"Huh!" sneered another man, squatting under the flap cleaning a rifle. "Mr. Westlake oughta bin the big noise in the Metropolitan an' he'd ha' pulled down more in men than ever he will hunting elephants I'll tell the world!"

"You're a nice guy, Alick," retorted Tony, leaning on his elbow, "but you lack culture. You should have taken a course with a correspondence school before you left and then you might have appreciated me. Anyway I'm going pot-hunting and try my hand at soothing the savage breast."

He rose to his feet, shotgun in hand, a lithe figure in khaki shirt and shorts.

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Although he was slender of build the depth of his chest and the set of his shoulders spoke of power.

"Watch your step then! That Aussie, Plessons, might take you for a hyena with the colic!" sang out Alick with a laugh that contained a distinct trace of malice.

"I should worry!" returned Tony cheerfully; and with his Tirai hat on the back of his blond head he strolled off with a slight limp into the bush, caroling defiantly:

"Seven little pussyfooters dancing round a cask!
Proud of playing tricks!
One flashed a pocket flask!
Then there were six!"

"We should worry!" snarled the rifle aner. "That bird makes me want to nails!"

here, Phil Sawyer," snapped Alick out of a thin-lipped mouth fringed with a Charlie Chaplin mustache after the British subaltern style. "Cut out that stuff. I've told you before. Remember you're a servant with this outfit—supposed to be anyway."

"Whatcher want to get sore about?" growled the other sullenly. "That darned Auzzie guide ain't here. Hazing a feller ain't slugging him. 'Sides, tomorrow's the twenty-seventh, ain't it? He can't slip one over by then. There's a mint o' ways to do the job, and then we kin beat it for the bright lights. This ain't no sort of life for a feller."

"Quit it, I said," ordered Alick.

"Aw, what's eatin' you, Alick? Can't I razz the bird as well as you?"

"No. Keep your trap shut, Dutchy. Get me?"

As Phil, alias "Dutchy," dropped his sh-yellow eyes to his job he seemed nce, and his grin was changed to a scowl as he bit back some retort.

Alick emerged fully from the tent and stood staring around the camp speculatively. To the left, within a *zareba* of branches erected by the porters, was a cluster of natives squatting around the cook fire, all in the dappled shade of the afternoon sun through the light timber.

Alick Bodiker was a tallish man built on the clothes-rack model. The blue eyes beneath the tow-colored hair were too wide apart and almost as expressionless as pieces of glass. As he turned toward Phil he regarded the other's bullet head with a sly smile. Then he went over and sat beside him.

" 'Sright, Phil," said he in a conciliating tone, "but you're too quick on the direct-action stuff. If you get him too sore maybe he'll get a kind of a grouch and spill his troubles to Plessons; 'nough maybe to give the Aussie a hunch—afterwards. All he knows now is that he's guiding us on an elephant hunt. Get me?"

"Sure I get you," said Phil Sawyer, who was constructed on the motor-truck principle and who looked, and was, hard boiled. "But don't Plessons ante up too?"

"He sure don't." Bodiker glanced across at the natives, smiling slyly. "He makes the hand high, boy! Good enough anyway for the pot with nobody who dare call! Listen here—" and he continued talking in a low tone for some time. "And that's that!" he concluded. "Hello, here he is! But what in ——'s he got?"

Entering the zareba was a stocky man with a grizzled beard who resembled an old and sagacious Airedale. This was their guide, Plessons. He was trailing a rifle in one hand and on the other arm supported a curious-looking object which at first was difficult to recognize as a white man; but white he was or had been, by the dirty gray beard. Aiding him on the far side was a tall negro emaciated almost to a skeleton.

"——! Here's Santy Claus comin' " muttered Sawyer as the group approached.

The old man was covered with clothes in tatters and a felt hat that flopped over his face. The native was nude save for a filthy loin cloth and a knife stuck in the girdle.

"What have you got there, Plessons?" demanded Bodiker.

"Dunno yet, Mr. Bodiker," returned the Australian. "He's abaht all in. This black fella spotted me and come a-runnin'. But he can't tell me nothin' neither."

"Can't tell you! Thought you spoke the lingo?"

"So I does, but the black boy can't speak. He's had his tongue slit."

"Tongue slit!" echoed Bodiker. "Who did it?"

"He's a-goin' ter write the story as soon as ever he gets to the typewriter," returned Plessons somberly. "'Ere, hold up!" For the old man had slumped to the ground as the negro let go his arm. "Hey, Wandie!

Tanuka!" he called to a couple of native servants.

"——!" said Sawyer booting the prone man in the ribs." He's a stiff un all right!"

"He'd dance a jig if you'd kiss him," snapped the Australian, darting an ugly look at Sawyer. "Here," he continued to the boys, "carry him on to my bed; and, Tanuka, get some hot water. *Upesi!*"

"What're you trying to give us?" began Sawyer, shooting his chin.

But Plessons, ignoring him, had knelt down by the old man and taken off his hat.

"My God!" muttered Bodiker.

Then, stooping, he stared hard at the fellow's face. The pupils of the eyes were inverted, and the sun-tanned skin, filthy with sweat and dirt, sagged upon the bony features and prominent nose. From the build of the frame he must have been a powerful man in health.

"Gosh, he looks mighty bad, doesn't he?" remarked Bodiker, rising with a curious smile on his lips. "I'll bet he never comes to." Then quickly: "He hasn't been able to say anything yet, has he, Plessons?"

"Yus, rarver. Didn't I tell yer, Mr. Bodiker?" Bodiker stared, apparently anxious. "Sung us 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star!' Don't he look it? Here, I wonder what this is naow?"

He indicated a swelling beneath the left eye which resembled a pustule.

"And here's another —— lumme, he's as full of 'em as a donkey's full of ticks!"

"Plague?" queried Bodiker, moving backward accompanied by Sawyer.

"Plague me eye!" grumbled Plessons.

He rose as two natives came and, picking up the inert body, made for the bell tent.

"Say!" exclaimed Sawyer. "None of that! I ain't goin' to sleep in the tent wit' that stiff. Maybe he's got some kind of a plague like you said. Seen them guys in the Lazar——"

"Sleep in the ruddy bush then!" snapped Plessons over his shoulder.

"'S 'nough!" whispered Bodiker as Sawyer started truculently after them. "That isn't the plague, man. Can't be in the middle of Africa."

As Sawyer hesitated, grumbling, came a hail from Tony Westlake reentering the *zareba*.

"Out of luck, Alick!" he called. "But say, who's Plessons got there? Saw him coming in."

Bodiker explained briefly, and they both followed across to the bell tent, where Plessons had already stripped the old man. His body was in a pitiable state; more emaciated than his companion the negro, and literally covered as closely as the measles with angry-looking pustules, some suppurating and emitting a horrible stench.

"Poor ——!" said Tony sympathetically. "I wonder who he is and how on earth he got in this mess."

"Maybe he had his *safari* cut up," suggested Plessons, "and he's bin wanderin' abaht with no food but berries and such like."

"Think he'll come round?"

"Dunno. Got a —— of a temperature. Maybe it's just fever. Ain't blackwater anyhow. And them sores ain't *veld* sores. Dunno what they are. The black fella's got a lot too. Here, ol' man, have a drop o' this?"

With some difficulty Plessons forced some brandy through the patient's teeth.

"Oh, he's a goner," said Bodiker, watching him intently.

"Oh, I've seen fellows looking worse than that pull through," returned Tony. "There, look!"

At Plessons' second attempt the eyelids fluttered and followed a faint choking cough as the raw spirit stung the throat.

"That's the boy!" exclaimed Plessons and fell to massaging over the heart with hot water, soap and permanganate.

Without remark Tony walked out and across to his own tent and presently came back with a small bottle of iodine; after dabbing some on the skinny forearm he stuck in a hypodermic needle.

"If he's got fever that should bring down the temperature a bit," he remarked.

"——, wish I'd thought of the needle," muttered Bodiker as if to himself and, bending low, intently watched the face of the sick man, who indubitably was breathing regularly but faintly.

"You'd better go and 'ave *chakula*, Mr. Westlaike," said Plessons. "I'll look arter him, and if he comes to I'll give yer a shout."

"That's a good idea," assented Tony. "But say, where's the nigger you brought in with him?"

"Told Tanuka ter give him some grub. Rummy go," Plessons added. "Fella's a

Swahili—coast man, y'know, Mr. Westlaike. Must ha' bin his servnt."

"Well, I'll have a look at him. Coming, Alick?"

"What's the good?" said Bodiker sourly. "He's dumb."

Tony glanced at his partner, whose eyes were glued to the sick man's face with a sharply inquiring expression as he went out.

The mutilated negro he found squatting on his hunkers in the bright moonlight by the camp-fire, the kitchen boys and porters staring at him half inquisitively, half superstitiously. The pustules on his face and body did not seem so far advanced as those of his white master's.

"*Habari gani?* How's things?" said Tony in the little Kiswahili he'd already picked up.

But neither the negro's head nor his eyes moved in the slightest.

"*Shenzie* (savages) cut him ear," explained Wandie, his personal boy, who spoke a little English.

"Good God, the swine!" ejaculated Tony and, bending, looked into the negro's face.

Immediately the latter's eyes gleamed, and he nodded his head as if approvingly, making an inarticulate noise, horrible to hear.

TONY returned to the camp table set beneath the big Mbuli tree where, lolling in a camp chair as if he owned the expedition, was Sawyer. Tony sat down and poured out a glass of whisky from the bottle placed on the table every evening just at sundown. Sawyer tentatively moved an empty glass in front of him, made a noise in his throat and said—

"Ain't that big bum gone yet?"

"No. I think he'll pull round," answered Tony, lighting a cigaret.

"Kin I have a shot, Mr. Westlake?" Sawyer asked.

"Sure," said Tony, pushing the bottle over to him and, noting the wetness of the empty glass, smiled slightly.

"Real stuff that!" stated Sawyer, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Feller needs a shot o' hooch here, I guess." A pause. "Say, Mr. Westlake!"

"Well?"

"You ain't mad at me, are yer? Didn't think I was gettin' kind o' fresh nor nothin'?"

"Oh, that's all right, Sawyer," replied Tony, giving the man one of his good-natured smiles. "A few months of this country's liable to get anybody's nerves on edge."

"It sure is!" agreed Sawyer heartily. "Didn't mean nothin', Mr. Westlake."

"Forget it. Hullo!" as a hail came from the bell tent.

He rose and hurried over. Sawyer followed him and stood silently at the back of the tent. Bodiker was standing at the head of the cot with a scowl on his face. The sick man's eyes were open and staring bewilderedly up at Plessons by the light of the hurricane lantern slung to the pole.

"That's all right, ol' cock!" Plessons was saying cheerily. "We found yer with a black fella. Don't you worry. We'll fix yer."

The feverish eyes wandered around to Tony and seemed disappointed. They closed momentarily as if in an effort at recollection.

"Don't—understand," he whispered faintly. "Where are the others?"

"What others? Your Swahili?" from Plessons.

"No—the men—who found us. You're not ——"

"Yes, yes," urged Tony. "This man here found you."

"No—no," insisted the other peevishly. Then with a convulsive start and fright in his eyes—

"Where is it?"

"What?"

"The sack! The sack!"

"You hadn't any sack. Had he, Plessons?"

"No; nothin'."

"Where did you come from?" persisted Tony as the man stared as if in blank dismay.

"Why—I told you. Oh, God, where are they?"

"Who?"

Seemingly torn with mental anguish, the man tried to raise himself, but merely succeeded in twisting a little to one side. Then he caught a glimpse of Bodiker's face staring down at him. Instantly Bodiker stood back. "See if another shot will do him good," said he in a low voice and strode rapidly from the tent.

"That man—that man," mumbled the old fellow frantically and strove again to rise.

"No, no; lie quietly," urged Tony persuasively. "You're mistaken. He can't be any of the men. He's been with us all the time."

"Yes," the old man insisted. "But—where are *they?*"

His eyes wandered piteously from one to the other.

"Where are what?"

"The sack—the stones—the letters?"

"He's wandering I think," whispered Tony. "Better try to get him to sleep a bit."

The old fellow lay quiet, striving hard to control his mind. Then suddenly, as if summoning all his will power for a supreme effort, he struggled half up in bed and cried out clearly:

"They'll never get the letters—nor the stones—and without they can't know how to find them. They ——"

The sudden entry of Bodiker startled him. He stared wildly and muttered unintelligibly. Then his supporting skeleton arm collapsed and he fell back on the pillow gasping.

They saw his lips moving and bent to listen. Tony caught an agonized, "Too late!" and the body went limp and the light out of the eyes.

"He's gone!" whispered Plessons.

"What did he say?" demanded Bodiker, and his voice was anxious. "Get any sense out of him?"

"No," responded Tony. "Died before we could get what he was trying to say."

Bodiker muttered something and queried, "Sure he's dead?" peering doubtfully into the glazing eyes. "Better give him another shot—maybe bring him round," he hastened to add.

"Ain't no use," said Plessons, "unless Peter'll give him one!"

Bodiker still stared doubtfully. Then after touching the eyeballs he seemed satisfied.

"Phew!" he sighed, wiping the gouts of sweat from his brow. "Guess he won't need—quinin after all!"

II

"OH, THAT bird's a dumbbell—dead from the neck up!" said Sawyer.

"Lumme!" snorted Plessons. "*You* might just as well have bin without a tongue for all the sense *you* talk!"

The Australian began anew trying to get some information out of the mutilated survivor; but as the African natives, unlike the American Indians, have never developed a sign language, little progress was made. One attempt, accompanied by throat noises, was the running of the fingers over the ground, ending in a jerk which the whites took to mean some animal rushing to spring upon its prey; another and the most frequently repeated, was the drawing by means of a knife of a circle in the earth into which he placed pebbles—which were rare in that country—or twigs.

"The old man," argued Tony, "talked about stones which might mean diamonds, and also about somebody who will never get them nor the letters and won't ever know where they came from."

"H-huh," grunted Bodiker noncommittally.

"Somethin' like it," agreed Plessons.

"Well, maybe he was a prospector and was coming out with a bunch of diamonds. Perhaps he knew he'd never live to get out, or in case he shouldn't, wrote to his people. That's about as far as I can get. But as for the circle stuff that's got me beat. What d'you think, Alick?"

"Guess you're right, Tony," assented Bodiker suavely. "But can't you think up what the circle might mean?"

"Bull!" contributed Sawyer.

"Might mean the place where he got 'em," put in Plessons. "A *vlei* or somethin' like that."

"What's a *vlei?*" inquired Tony.

"Small valley where yer might find blue clay."

"Well, he might have meant a round kind of flat between hills?"

"Sure that's it!" agreed Bodiker. "You've got the brains of the outfit, Tony!"

The native, who, squatting before them, had been watching the lips and the expressions of the white men, made another noise and, touching Tony on the knee, pointed toward the southwest.

"By the ——, I believe he understands English," exclaimed Tony, "from reading the lips!"

Right then the man nodded and made a strangled grunt.

"He does! Say—" Tony bent toward him, pronouncing the words slowly—"are they—diamonds?"

The man looked puzzled. Plessons repeated the words in Kiswahili, receiving an energetic nod of assent.

Sawyer grunted and leaned forward, his small eyes gleaming. But Bodiker frowned swiftly.

"How many days?" queried Tony.

The native held up six fingers.

"Lordy, quite close! Ask him if it's—what you said it might be, Plessons."

But this time the man shook his head and pointed to his circle.

"Oh, well, that doesn't matter," said Tony. "Ask him if he'll take us there."

The man, making a hideous noise, shook his head and nodded and, touching Tony, pointed toward where his master lay buried.

"What in ——'s he getting at?" snapped Bodiker.

"Beats me," said Tony as Plessons began talking in Kiswahili. "Perhaps he means, though, that we must see to the old man's share—his heirs I guess."

"Oh, to —— wit' that bird," mumbled Sawyer unnoticed as Tony intently watched the conversation.

"Can't maike aht what he's arter," reported Plessons. "Seems to s'y, 'Yus' and then, 'No.' "

The man gave up making his gobbling noises and stared very shrewdly at each white in turn. After a prolonged regard he deliberately touched Tony and Plessons on their knees and nodded; then, indicating the other two, shook his head. The meaning was obvious; even Sawyer got it; yet Bodiker pretended he didn't understand, murmuring—

"What does the fellow mean?"

"What's he mean, the bonehead!" exclaimed Sawyer. "He's all set to take them guys and not us! I should worry! I'll soon fix him!"

That one of the deeper passions in the man's makeup had been stirred was revealed by the wicked glitter in the eyes. But Bodiker laughed.

"Oh, you've got him all wrong, Sawyer," said he smoothly. "He couldn't have meant that, could he, Tony? Why, he's never seen any of us before. All white men are alike to a nigger. D'you think he meant that, Tony?"

"Seems to," admitted Tony reluctantly. "What d'you think, Plessons?"

"Very difficult to understand him," returned the Australian. "Maybe the pore fella was just a-askin' for some needle and thread to mend his trawsers."

Sawyer snorted violently.

"Don't try to be funny," admonished Tony. "What d'you think he really means?"

The guide regarded the native and then looked slowly at Tony.

"It's like this, Mr. Westlaike," said he, regarding Tony all the time. "These here black fellas are rummy beggars. They kind o' see things we can't, and they has all sorts o' rummy idees. Superstitions, y' know. Maybe"—and his eyes twinkled—"he don't taike a fancy ter Sawyer's faice, or maybe he don't taike ter Mr. Bodiker's marf—and there yer are! Yer can't do nohtin' with him!"

"Huh!" exploded Sawyer savagely. "That bird's got another think coming!"

"Tell him we're partners," said Tony, "and that we stick together."

For answer the man pantomimed kicking a prostrate body. Sawyer swore and threatened to strike him.

"All right," said Bodiker suavely. "That doesn't matter. You two fellers can go ahead and grab the stuff and we'll wait. Comes to the same thing in the end which of us two gets it; doesn't it, Tony, old man? Say, you go right ahead and I'll sit out this hand."

"No," said Tony, frowning at some secret implication. "I don't like the idea. Besides, Alick, it's your outfit."

"Forget it," said Bodiker.

"No, no," insisted Tony obstinately as he rose. "The fellow who puts up the dough has the say-so."

"But you and I are partners—fifty-fifty. Besides," added Bodiker with a boisterous laugh, "if you go under I'll get your share or if I die of boredom sitting around you'll get mine. So what's the odds?"

"Oh what's the good of arguing?" retorted Tony. "I don't like it; but whatever you say, Alick, goes."

"Well, if we can't get this fellow to be reasonable," concluded Bodiker, smiling slyly, "you two go right ahead as I said, and we'll wait."

As Tony went off he told Plessons to take the man away, commenting—

"Maybe he'll come to his senses tomorrow."

"Say, Alick," whispered Sawyer, husky with rage, "don't let that sucker pull that stuff on yer! Gi' me that nigger hobo and I'll fix him good. He'll come a-running when I'm through."

"Shut your trap, you bonehead—and keep it shut," admonished Bodiker sourly. Then he smiled slyly. "And iron out that mug of yours, Phil. Sit up and look pretty, —— you! Don't you know it's my friend's birthday?"

"Holy ——, that's right!" exclaimed Sawyer, and grinned.

ON ACCOUNT of the delay incident to burying the old man the trek had not been far that day. In the Congo, where they had picked up the Australian, a trader who had been in the old days a hunter and prospector and now acted as their guide and interpreter, they had been disgusted to find another prohibition—one against shooting elephants without an expensive license which took the gilt off the profits; then, on the advice of an American explorer, who had hinted that in a certain district which had at one time been—on the map—German territory, were elephants innumerable and no inquisitive whites, they had trekked south.

Tony, his usual sunny smile in shadow, had retired to his cot a bit peeved. The native's apparent cantankerousness seemed to promise to force him under another obligation to his partner. The latter's tendency—well, if not to jeer was to be generally unpleasant, a tendency which Tony noticed had been steadily increasing since they had left civilization and had begun to make the agreements he had accepted extremely irksome. But it was his own fault, he told himself, for he should have known from army experience that the most congenial of fellows in a city may turn out to be a poor buddy in the field.

After all, Tony reflected, he hadn't known much of Bodiker, who was about ten years his senior. He had been a college friend of his elder brother Harold, who had always been a rolling stone and during the war had been reported murdered by bandits in the interior of China.

A few months after the Armistice Tony had emerged from a hospital with a game leg and saw clearly that there would be little use for him in the States with no knowledge of a job. He was an orphan. True, he had a wealthy uncle who refused to play the usual rôle, and the nephew wasn't made of the stuff to go bumming on relatives. Anyway old Silas Gunner's money was to go to a cousin, Jack Gunner, a city man of domestic inclinations.

As a stop-gap while his leg was mending Tony secured a billet with the Graves Commission, a job which made his soul sick. Then, just when the itching of his feet had become intolerable, Alick Bodiker blew into Paris announcing that he was sailing for East Africa on an elephant-hunting trip, swore that Tony was the very man he'd been praying for, and when Tony disclosed the state of his bankroll, offered to put up expenses on a basis of fifty-fifty. Tony demurred at such generous terms; but Bodiker, with the aid of genuine White Label, had nearly wept on the other's shoulder, saying that Harold had done him a mighty good turn and that he was tickled to death to have a chance to repay it to Harold's brother.

Later Bodiker had proposed that Tony insure himself; but the latter had replied, laughing, that that was merely waste of good money. Bodiker agreed and suggested that as it wasn't likely an elephant would get them both, they'd better make their wills in each other's favor.

"Then if I go under, boy, it won't leave you stranded," he had added with an affectionate pat on the shoulder.

Tony eventually had accepted, thinking that Bodiker was one of the whitest men he'd ever met. Coming out on the boat, he had been the best of sports and Sawyer—by whom Bodiker swore as a good skate and thoroughly trustworthy—had, as a servant, remained in the second class. Yet ever since leaving the railhead Bodiker had developed that nagging, jeering spirit—nothing in itself; but like a burr in the stocking day and night it began to get on his nerves. The feeling was intensified by the sense of obligation which hobbled any efficacious comebacks. More exasperating, too, was the fact that Sawyer followed his master's lead.

Now as he lay musing Tony bitterly regretted the generous terms. The mutilated native's arbitary choice would, he feared, despite Bodiker's easy acceptance, aggravate the situation.

Tony was nobody's fool; but, generous and good-natured to a fault, he was too apt, in spite of experience, to take a man as being as straight as himself until, as the law is supposed to do, he was proven otherwise. But what motive Bodiker had he could not guess; merely apparently the man's temperament coming out at the contact with the primitive. However, a rational explanation of how a wound is caused doesn't take much of the suffering away.

THIS dismal musings were disturbed by Wandie, his boy, calling him for the usual sundown peg, an institution carefully—even by Bodiker—limited ostensibly to one drink only. As Tony advanced to the table Bodiker called out boisterously:

"Come on, ol' sourdough, and take a shot to waken you up!"

A second look, followed by a swift glance from the Australian, confirmed the suspicion that both Bodiker and Sawyer had taken more than the usual sundowner. Tony sat and drank his peg. Bodiker poured out for the other three, saying—

"We'll just have another one on you, Tony!"

And he stood up with a sly smile followed by Sawyer, grinning.

"Come on, Plessons!" urged Bodiker; and to Tony's amazement, but evidently for courtesy's sake, Plessons obeyed. "Now, Anthony Gunner Westlake, here's congratulations and a long life!"

"Long and as rich as a bootlegger's!" said Sawyer, grinning widely.

"But—what—I don't understand," began Tony.

"Don't you know the date?"

"Er—October, isn't it?"

"Holy ——, he fergets his own date!" shouted Sawyer.

"The twenty-seventh!" reminded Bodiker. "Your birthday, man!"

"Oh, sure; that's right," agreed Tony, feeling a trifle embarrassed. "Thanks very much!"

They drank and sat down. Bodiker yelled for food. When the table was set Tanuka appeared with another bottle of whisky and two of champagne. Again Tony caught Plessons' eye and had a hunch that if they drank something would get started. Yet what could he do? He wasn't in command.

"Too hot to drink much, Alick," he suggested quietly. "Let's halve it?"

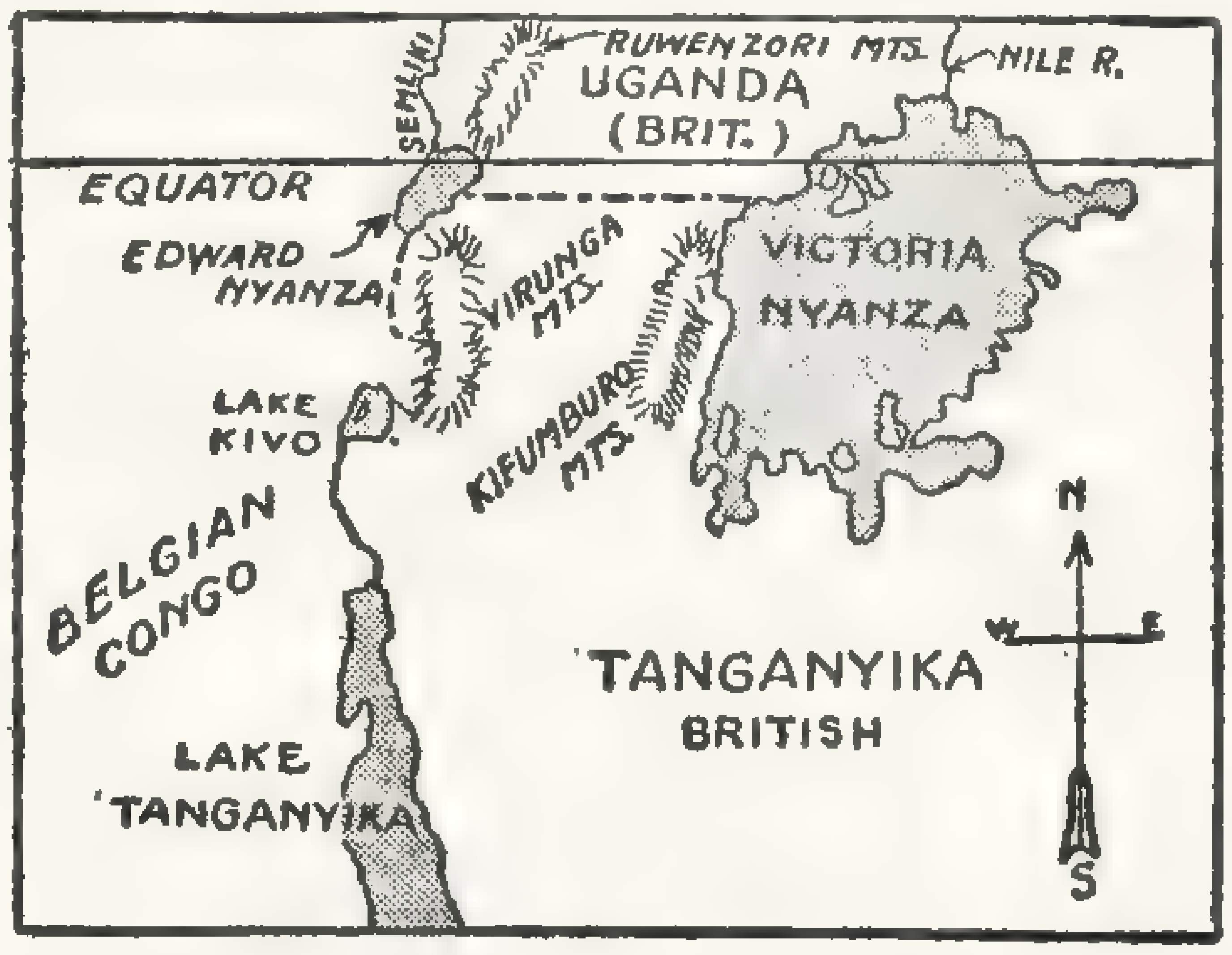
"Oh don't give us that apple sauce!" laughed Bodiker.

"Sing yer pussyfoot song!" urged Sawyer insolently.

"Don't feel in song tonight," returned Tony amicably.

"Thank —— for great mercies!" sneered Bodiker.

Now to men unaccustomed to liquor a few drinks in an equatorial climate may have a rapid effect; already Sawyer's eyes in the light of the hurricane lamp were slightly wild and his features tougher than usual. Bodiker showed too an unnecessary loudness of voice. And champagne and whisky do not mix well.



The swollen African moon crept over the forest edge, killing the lantern light to a mere yellow leaf. Afar rose an occasional irritable yapping of jackals. From the group of porters around the smoky cooking fires the hum of chatter blended with the nocturnal chant of the mosquitoes.

The meal passed without any rupture, due to the restraint of Tony, who was resolutely determined not to quarrel. But the gaseous wine on top of the whisky was working on Sawyer; he began to address even more openly insolent remarks, and Tony's policy of ignoring him infuriated him the more. As the coffee was brought he interrupted Plessons, who was talking about the trail, a topic introduced purposely by Tony to sidetrack the dangerous subject of the dumb Swahili.

"Huh! Guess you think ye're a wise guy, Tony?"

Tony was aware of the slightly bloodshot eyes boring into him and the aggressive hunch of the massive shoulders; he was conscious too that his own fingers were shaking with nervous irritation; but he smiled at Bodiker, who had quieted down and was being as amiable as he knew how to be, saying apropos of Plessons' remark:

"I think Plessons is right, Alick. Anyway he knows——"

"Bugs on the dood stuff, ain't yer, Tony?" butted in Sawyer again.

"Quit it," said Bodiker to him sharply.

"What's eatin' youse?" growled Sawyer, glaring at him.

"Now that'll be all, Dutchy," snapped Bodiker angrily, laying his fingers on the man's arm.

"Lay off me, yer ——!" snarled Sawyer, jerking Bodiker's hand away.

The glare in the man's eyes was that of a killer, and Tony remarked in the moonlight that Bodiker's face went the color of pale-green blotting paper; he knew that his man was getting out of hand; mad drunk.

Tony rose languidly, saying as if he had noticed nothing unusual:

"Well, guess I'll hit the hay. Good——"

"No, yer don't! Sit down, you four-flusher!"

Tony went white this time, and his lips were trembling; but he controlled himself and finished quietly—

"Good night, fellows!"

"Yah!" yelled Sawyer like a Comanche war-whoop. "He's a low-down —— yeller belly! Think we ain't wise to youse? I'm givin' yer the low down. Huh! Youse and dat —— nigger fixin' a frame-up to double-cross us on the di'monds and do the dirty on yer part——"

"Quit it, Dutchy, you fool bonehead!" exclaimed Bodiker angrily.

"Don't Dutchy me, yer —— crook! It's him I'm after! I'll——"

Tony stopped, looking back, trembling from head to foot. As Bodiker, pallid of face, jumped to his feet, nervously putting out his hands, Sawyer gave a swift short-arm jolt and Bodiker went backward over the chair.

Streaming obscene abuse, Sawyer charged head half down, upsetting the table in his passage.

Tony's jaw set, and the trembling left his limbs. He knew the man was murder-mad for some incomprehensible reason. Waiting, cold as marble now, until he was within striking distance, Tony dodged a wild swing and drove with his left.

Plunging sidewise, Sawyer went to earth and came up instantly, spluttering oaths. Tony danced backward, maneuvering to get the moon behind him.

The blow had sobered Sawyer, but had left him nonetheless murderous. Tony knew that in weight and power of taking punishment he hadn't a chance. His advantages were a slightly longer reach and speed; and of the latter he must make the most, for one full punch with that freight wagon behind it and——

As he expected, Sawyer rushed, swinging wicked punches, contemptuously leaving himself wide open. Tony got home on the solar plexus and the ear, received a bad jolt on the heart and just avoided a clinch.

"Keep him orf! Don't let 'im clinch!" he heard Plessons shouting, and, fearful that the guide was about to interfere, Tony yelled for him to keep out.

Sawyer came again. Tony dodged a hefty swing for the jaw and took it on the left shoulder. The blow swung him half around. Fortunately Sawyer was too clumsy to seize the advantage, and Tony as he came about smashed two full punches behind the ear and on the jaw which visibly rocked his man.

Then his game leg hindered his footwork. He was a fraction of a second late in breaking away; and Sawyer, plating a vicious corkscrew punch on the kidneys, grabbed him by the shirt, kicking his legs from under him.

In a flash Tony realized what kind of a scrapper he was up against; but he hadn't learned trench fighting for nothing. He felt one powerful hand clutch his throat and the thumb of the other seeking his eyes.

Seizing Sawyer's free hand he put out all his strength to force the wrist back over the man's neck into an armlock and brought up his knee at the same time, registering a grunt and a relaxation of the grip on his throat.

Still Sawyer's thumb and fingers were boring into his windpipe; the blood was roaring in his ears. Dragging desperately at the wrist, he used his knee again and again with effect, and succeeded, aided by each momentary slackening of resistance, in forcing the elbow over the nape of the neck.

Just as it seemed as if his lungs were bursting and his senses going he heard a hoarse shriek and the grip on his throat ceased as Sawyer threw his body sidewise to save his arm.

Sobbing for breath and half blind, Tony struggled to his feet, expecting a crashing blow which would finish him. Seeing a face like a white flower against the moon, he hurled his weight and failing strength into one punch.

To his utter surprize the great bulk sank.

Then he found himself, panting, standing over his opponent and heard Plessons saying—

"I do 'ope yer haven't hurt the pore fella, gov'nor!"

"Say, Tony, ol' man," butted in Bodiker feverishly, "I'm awfully sorry! But he was drunk, you know, and——"

"Oh, go to ——!" gasped Tony, and wheeling, walked unsteadily across to his tent.

III

TONY had gone to his tent boiling with anger; more furious now that the safety valve in the shape of his sense of obligation to Bodiker had blown off. Although he didn't know it he was as mad as any carnivore long deprived of its prey; the lust for murder which dwells in all of us had been quickened; and he had tasted of power, power to give this loud bully the lesson he deserved.

Immediately, mouthing excuses, had come Bodiker whom he consigned to the customary place. Ardently he desired to tell Bodiker that he refused to continue the agreements, but short of walking out of camp—and not even his clothes nor rifle belonged to him—he could not say a word.

At last, exasperated by Bodiker's abject excuses, he turned his head and said sharply:

"Oh, for ——'s sake, shut up, Bodiker! It's your own fault. You've been egging on the man the whole time. Now what have you got against me?"

"Nothing, old man," whined Bodiker. "Why, that's just ridiculous! Wish I'd never brought that —— yegg, but he's been —been with me a long time. Tried him out, and know I can depend on him."

"You surely can!"

"Yes, I know; but he's never been like that before. He was mad drunk. It was my fault to let him have so much liquor, but it was your birthday and——"

"Oh, shut up! You make me tired. There's something else behind this, Alick. What is it? You've been picking on me ever since we left the railhead."

"I haven't, old man, I swear. Maybe I was a bit liverish with this —— climate and——"

"Oh, quit it! But one thing. Get this: If he starts anything again I'll finish what I began. Good night!"

Naturally Tony couldn't sleep. He lay quietly, trying to calm his mind and sum up the situation rationally. His suspicions of some ulterior motive faded; after all perhaps Bodiker was right; Sawyer's was a case of fighting drunk, and Sawyer had picked on him merely because the bruiser had never liked him—and Tony reciprocated thoroughly.

Just as he was dropping off he heard Bodiker call him; but, not desiring any more futile discussion, he did not reply. Bodiker rose quietly and slipped out of the tent. Tony heard him softly calling Plessons, who did not answer, and then in a lower whisper—

"Phil! Say, Phil!"

In the twittering silence he heard the creak of the cot under Sawyer's clumsy movements; and, gliding out of bed, he peeped through the tent flap. In the bright moonlight he saw the two men walk off into the bush. An impulse urged him to follow.

"—— if I'll spy!" he muttered characteristically and went back to bed.

Next morning as soon as he emerged Sawyer came shambling across. Tony ignored him, walking up to the camp-fire for coffee. But the man followed and came up with a grin.

"Say, Mr. Westlake," said he, "I wants to ax yer pardon. I was soused last night. Bugs. That's straight. And yer give me what I was asking for. Ye're a man, you are. Put it there, will yer?"

Tony looked at him. He wasn't fooled in the least. Yet as the fellow apologized what could he do? Perfunctorily he shook hands.

"That's all right, Sawyer. But see here, I should advise you to leave the booze alone."

"I ain't going to touch another drop o' hooch on the —— trip! I tol' Al—Mr. Bodiker. Didn't I, boss?"

"Yes, he's all right," concurred Bodiker. "Phil's a bit of a rough diamond, but his heart's in the right place."

"Diamond!" mused Tony as he squatted down. "Wonder if that's what he blew up over? Probably."

"Say, Tony," said Bodiker in a casual way a little later, "we've—I've decided that if that dumb guy's going to pull that stuff it would be better if we pretended to fall for it. You and Plessons go on and we'll loiter along the trail behind. As soon as you strike anything you can send a message by one of the boys and say what seems good. Do you mind?"

"All right," said Tony curtly.

He had spotted the "we" as well as a quick glance between the two of them.

"There is something on," he said to himself, "but what the —— can it be?"

So it was arranged. Tony and Plessons were to take the green tent as it was lighter. By a little after eight they were under weigh with the agreement that Bodiker and Sawyer were to trek the next morning so that they would always, wate permitting, be a short trek behind.

Tony hadn't realized the relief it would be to get out of that atmosphere of subterranean, nagging antagonism; even forgot after the first hour to speculate on what the real motives were; content to put it all down to the simple fact that both men were towners pining for the bright lights. Lifting up his voice, he again began to howl his naturally cheerful soul to the winds of Africa; and Plessons grinned, for he was a wise old bird.

When they were halted at noon to give the porters a rest during the heat the Australian commented suddenly:

"What I like abaht them blokes is they're good maites. Maybe kinder funny nah and then, but they'd stick to yer through thick and thin."

"D'you think they would!" exclaimed Tony, and was surprized at the unconscious thought revealed.

"Nah, Mr. Westlaike, yer oughter know I'm a bloke what allus says what he means."

Tony caught the twinkle in the sharp eyes buried in the thatches of the eyebrows and laughed.

"Oh I don't think that——"

He recalled Bodiker's face when Sawyer got rough.

"Well, anyway they wouldn't try to put it over a pal," conceded Plessons.

"Just what d'you mean by that, Plessons?" demanded Tony.

"I dunno meself, gov'nor. 'Struth I don't. Wish I did!"

"Well, what made you say that?"

"Them two went orf last night to have a little *shauri* on their own."

"Yes, I know. I saw them go. Bodiker was trying to get Sawyer to behave himself, and I think that's why he apologized this morning."

"Was you bottle or breast fed, Mr. Westlaike?"

"Bottle or breast! What on earth——"

"Kinder fort you'd remember, as it couldn't have been so long ago." Tony looked at him inquiringly and then laughed. "Yer see, I'm a curious bloke, I am; and last night I kinder wondered what them two was up to, so I does a bit of black-fella business."

"Trailed 'em?"

"Yus. The bruiser bloke wus grousing something awful for what you'd done to him last night. But t'other bloke he choked him orf saying as how he'd pretty nigh busted the gaime. Says as if anything happened naow they'd say as he done it 'cos that —— —that's me, gov'nor—would have seen it, and that the big cove ain't got no more brains than a turtle. 'And 'sides,' says he, 'they ain't got the di'monds yet.' Then the big fella says as that's right, and they goes on talking quieter so's I couldn't hear no more what they says."

Tony gazed very thoughtfully at Plessons.

"But I can't see what advantage they would gain if—as that apparently infers—they could get rid of me."

"Well, I dunno, gov'nor. That's what they said. If we'd had the di'monds a baiby could see what they was arter."

Although several times Plessons and Tony tried out the mutilated Swahili they utterly failed to get any further inkling of what he meant by the circle and the pebbles —except that he always chose pebbles when available, which seemed to bear out the diamond hypothesis.

TWO days passed during which Tony naturally pondered on Plessons' account of the Bodiker-Sawyer conference; but the more the anger and irritation caused by the episode died away the less he attached any serious significance. After all what had they said? Merely that if Sawyer in his mad drunkenness had killed Tony he could not escape because Plessons would have seen the deed—implying, it was true, that Bodiker would have been willing to keep his mouth shut.

That afternoon just as they broke out of the timber the dumb man suddenly evinced great excitement, mouthing and pointing over a rolling country of scrub to the southwest toward what appeared to be a long low range of hills forest-covered; then, drawing the same circle he began throwing in twigs as there were no pebbles. This action seemed to indicate that the diamond field—if that was what he had meant—was not far away.

To the west, black against the setting sun, were jagged, volcanic peaks marking the approximate line of the vast cleavage through Africa caused by some remote upheaval of the earth's crust. There were no signs of native villages, but with the spoor of game the country was crisscrossed. Directly for the long low range the dumb guide led them, frequently uttering excited noises.

On the following day, veering a bit to the east for water, they came in the scrub upon vulture- and jackal-picked skeletons and fifty yards farther on entered a clearing covered with charred stumps of huts, among which were many more skeletons and scattered spears and arrowheads.

"Must have had a raid and been wiped out," opined Tony.

"Ain't no raid, gov'nor," said Plessons, who had been poking about. "See them bangles? Women and kids! Natives don't wipe aht women; they taike 'em as slaves and mostly all the warriors captured alive. No; white men done that."

"But this is British territory according to the mandate!"

"Yus; but the Belgian frontier ain't far away. And see here, gov'nor!" The Australian stooped to pick up an empty cartridge case. "See, Mauser sure as gum trees grow!"

"Boche! But the British and others use Mauser sporting guns. Anyway there can't be any boches here now. They haven't got a square yard left in all Africa."

"I dunno," said Plessons. "Maybe they're German tourists!"

Farther on near the water was the site of an old camp with the marks of a tent, not more, according to Plessons, than a week old—if that.

"Good ——!" exclaimed Tony, recalling what they had considered the dying man's delirium. Maybe he wasn't raving after all and these were the fellows who apparently took his sack of stones and letters. Don't you remember, he insisted that we weren't the men who had rescued him?"

"Yus," answered Plessons; "but if these were the blokes they don't look as if they'd have stuck at putting him out."

"No, but he may have escaped. Pity the poor old fellow didn't live long enough to give us the real story. And say, maybe it was these people who mutilated this poor —— here?"

"No, gov'nor, the coves what done this wouldn't have bothered about that; they'd have just have put him out. That's native, that is. Keep his marf shut and get the work out of him."

They camped there that night. Over the camp-fire talk Tony suddenly interrupted wild speculations on the mystery of the old man and the white camp.

"Say," he said, "I've got a hunch. If these whites had a tent they, or he, must have had quite a bunch of porters. They should have left something of a trail."

With the rising of the sun they were on the job. Even if the trail was a week old the spoor was fairly easy to read. There had been two whites, one a big heavy man by his boots. They had evidently continued to the northeast; but their back trail came directly from the hills.

Thirty-six hours later they came upon another old camp, where a little of the veil of mystery was lifted. Mouthing his ghastly noises excitedly, the dumb guide began by touching Tony as he pointed toward the forest-clad hills and holding up one finger; then, tapping his chest, he indicated five.

"One white and five natives," interpreted Tony. "Get that, Plessons?"

The man touched his ears and his mouth and again lifted five fingers.

"Good ——, four others deaf and dumb!"

Then the Swahili imitated a man asleep, sudden horror, and put his hands up. After that, dragging Tony with him, he went to the tent site and pantomimed one white within and five natives lying outside all bound. Pointing to the sun and making a gesture of disappearing, he lay down, glided to the tent site on his belly and went through the motions of cutting bonds and crawling away.

Then he rose and pointed to Tony and Plessons. There proceeded a horrible gust of uncouth noises, evidently registering anger, and he began to cast about in the adjacent scrub like a setter.

The two whites followed until he literally started to bellow. When they reached him no explanation was necessary. Four skeletons lay bleaching in the sun.

"Guess that's plainer than a movie," said Tony. "These fellows must have captured them; he cut the old man loose in the night and they escaped and the other four were shot. But that doesn't in the least explain why."

"I dunno, gov'nor, neither. Looks as if they'd escaped from somewhere and them blokes was on their trail, don't it? Maybe the old un was a pard making off with the loot. But why was the five black fellas deaf and dumb? Rummy go, I calls it."

While they were talking the Swahili had been watching them with the agonized expression of an intelligent dog trying to understand his master. Evidently he couldn't lip-read English spoken rapidly. As soon as they glanced at him he gesticulated energetically, pointing to the southwest. They nodded, and he seemed calmer.

That night a heavy rainstorm passed, washing out the spoor, and the man developed a high fever, growing rapidly delirious. Examining him, Tony noticed that the pustules were more inflamed and were suppurating as the old man's had. Despite a powerful dose of quinin the man was quite weak. Although he made game efforts to struggle along, by noon he collapsed.

As he was more valuable than the camp cots and the tent these were abandoned for Bodiker to pick up, and the two porters helped the sick man. They got him to another old camp, but he was undoubtedly worse; even his ungodly throat noises were feeble.

There seemed nothing for it but to camp until the man was better unless they jettisoned more stuff, for two porters couldn't possibly carry him, emaciated though he was, for the whole day. After food Tony had another look at him. He was raving, and his temperature was 107 Fahrenheit.

"Out of luck," said Tony. "He's almost as good as gone, but I'll give him a subcutaneous injection which may pull him through."

He went to his medicine chest and to his astonishment found that the hypodermic syringe was already charged.

"That's queer," he muttered, and then recollected that Bodiker had prepared a shot for the old man who had died before it had been administered. Careless swine, he thought, to forget to empty it. Doesn't matter; it's only a few days old.

After sterilizing the needle he rolled the dry-skinned, groaning wretch over and gave him the shot, remarking:

"If we can pull down the temperature a couple of points he may pull through yet."

But as they stood watching, the man moaned heavily and straightened out; then a rigor shook the body; another passed; the muscles stiffened and the eyeballs became rigid.

"Good God!" exclaimed Tony, bending over him. "The fellow's dead!"

IV

ON THE slope of the hills in the deep shadows of fairly dense timber sat Tony, Bodiker and Sawyer on the bales which the porters had just thrown down.

"Can't understand it," Bodiker was saying. "Quinin couldn't have killed him. You must have shot it into him just as the death crisis came on. Well, it's a pity he's gone before showing us whatever he had to show—although to tell the truth I never thought there was much to it. We may as well get busy on the elephant stuff. Looks pretty good to me judging from what we saw coming up. What does Plessons say?"

"Yes, he thinks well of it," returned Tony, "but from what we saw of the fellow before he went west, what the old man said, and the murdered four I told you about, we both think the thing's worth investigating. Anyway Plessons went off at sun-up to scout around a bit."

"Waste of time," opined Bodiker with some obstinacy. "We'd much better make a camp here and start after the elephants tomorrow."

"All right, if you're set on it," deferred Tony. "Anyway we can always keep our eyes open while hunting."

"Well, don't get sore about it," returned Bodiker with a touch of the old sour manner. "What d'you reckon you can make out of this circle and stone stuff?"

"I told you I am not sure of anything. Just a hunch, that's all. Mighty curious anyway. Well, I'll get my men to pitch the tents."

As Tony rose to go over to the porters he caught on Sawyer's face a sly grin which brought back all his old suspicions. But —— it, he muttered, what's the motive?

As the death of the dumb guide had removed the alleged source of friction Tony had, as in duty bound, waited for his partner. Bodiker's greetings had been something in the old suave manner and Sawyer's so respectful that it was a bit overdone.

At Tony's instructions the boys placed his own and Plessons' cots in the old bell tent and Bodiker's and Sawyer's in the green tent, the more luxurious of the two. Both men went to it without comment.

Lunch passed off with spasmodic remarks between Bodiker and Tony; Sawyer wolfed his food as usual with scarcely a word. But a very strong sense of mutual embarrassment dwelt about them. Afterward Bodiker and his men retired to their tent apparently for a siesta. The former, stirring out about two, found Tony stretched under a tree cleaning his revolver, and began to grumble that Plessons seemed a mighty long time. When Tony remarked that it didn't matter and that anyway he'd probably come back by moonlight Bodiker glanced at him quickly, muttered something to himself and sitting at the bole lighted a cigaret. He fidgeted about for some time, unusually nervous, and then suddenly said tentatively—

"Has he always struck you as straight, Tony?"

"Who?" demanded Tony, knowing very well to whom Bodiker referred.

"Plessons, of course," with a frown.

"Yes—quite."

"Huh! Don't know so much. After all, we don't know anything about him— I was thinking— Supposing there was something in this crazy diamond stuff of yours."

"Well, what about it?"

"D'you think if he found it he—he'd be sure to report to us? Remember he's on a salary. Don't get a bean out of it."

"Sure he would."

"Huh! I'm not so sure, Tony. If he were a wise skate he'd keep his mouth shut and come back later. Shouldn't blame him either."

"Oh, you wouldn't, eh?"

"Well, would you? He's not a pal of ours, and he's human. Don't do to take any fool chances."

"Oh, well, don't get rattled," retorted Tony, smiling at Bodiker. "You don't believe in the yarn anyway. Hullo, here he is!"

Through the trees came Plessons alone. He swung right up to them and without greeting Bodiker said—

"I've fahnd it, Mr. Westlaike!"

"Found what!" exclaimed Bodiker excitedly.

"Fahnd a elephant, Mr. Bodiker, drinkin' whisky and soda," asserted Plessons gravely.

"Now don't get fresh, Plessons," began Bodiker.

" 'Struth, it's true! Why, he offered me one and I refused! Nah yer know it ain't no lie!"

"Don't rot," said Tony, nearly laughing at Bodiker's indignation.

"Well, gov'nor, it was that thing the pore dumb bloke was talking abaht."

"What? The circle and the pebbles?"

"Yus. Come along and I'll show yer. Just on the top of the hill."

"Nonsense," interposed Bodiker. "Who ever found diamonds on the top of a hill? Even I know better than that!"

"Who was talking abaht di'monds, mister?"

"What d'you mean then?"

"What Mr. Westlaike said. Come along. I'll show yer. No extra charge."

Plessons' eyes twinkled vividly; he was evidently extremely pleased. Bodiker regarded him perplexedly and angrily.

"You've been drinking," he snapped.

"I ain't."

"But there isn't time," objected Bodiker. "Tomorrow morning—if you're serious."

"Is there time to make it before sundown?" inquired Tony, and at a nod from Plessons: "Well, we can come back by moonlight. She rises about nine. Come on, Alick!"

Finally Bodiker consented but insisted upon taking a few porters and the smaller tent, arguing with a town man's fear of discomfort that they might have to stop for the night.

Within two hours' climb the timber gave abruptly to a wild moor, patches of heather and giant ferns among tumbled boulders. About two miles ahead, sprouting as abruptly as a hurdle, was a bamboo forest, and in the comparative open some five miles away was visible the raw summit of an extinct volcano.

As the going became harder Bodiker, seconded by his henchman, grumbled harping upon his unusual knowledge that diamonds didn't grow on mountain tops. Owing to Bodiker's persisting in taking a long rest in the shade of the bamboo, which appeared as impenetrable as the wall of China, and to the painfully slow process of wriggling through the dense canes, they emerged just in time to get a glimpse of a bare and rugged pile of rocks against the vermilion and orange glow of sunset.

While the boys were lighting a fire and pitching the tent in the dark, Bodiker grouched sourly that it was Plessons' fault; he ought to have known this and known that. Immediately the master began the man followed suit. Tony ignored them; but when Plessons remarked that it was hardly worth while putting up the tent for a couple of hours the other two stared, and Sawyer growled—

"What's that ye're givin' us?"

"Why, when the moon rises abaht nine we're going on to see the pretty circus."

"Where did yer get that stuff?"

"Who said we were?" supported Bodiker.

"I did," replied Tony sharply. "There's no sense in stopping here all night. We can return by moonlight."

"Moonlight!" snorted Bodiker. "D'you think I'm going to take the trail at night? —— knows what we might meet, and it's as dark as Tophet in the bamboo forest. Why, you're crazy, Tony!"

"Well, *we're* going."

"Like —— yer are!" gritted Sawyer.

"I say, no," suddenly announced Bodiker. "I'm the leader."

"I'll say they don't, Phil!" contributed Sawyer.

"Sure you're the leader," returned Tony. "Well, the camp and the men and your darned rifles stop here; but Plessons and I are going to the top tonight. And that's that. I'm about through."

Although he had ignored Sawyer as usual, it was Sawyer more than Bodiker who was responsible for the wave of anger riveting a half-determined resolution.

In the utter silence of the heights Sawyer's unintelligible growl sounded like some wild beast of the jungle.

"Well," inquired Tony quietly, "how about it, Bodiker?"

In the flickering light of the fire Bodiker's creatures registered two emotions better than many a movie star—physical fear and greed.

"Now be reasonable, Alick," continued Tony, controlling the rage that had welled. "Here are your guns. You stop here and have a good sleep. We'll do a scout round. How's that?"

"Nothing doing!" shouted Sawyer. "Yer'll —— well do as ye're told!"

"That's enough, Phil. Shut up!" said Bodiker, glaring at Sawyer. "All right, Tony; as you say. But remember it's my duty to think of the safety of the expedition, so don't blame me if anything happens."

"Well, good night," said Tony, disgusted at the stupid hypocrisy, turning on his heel. "Come on, Plessons, we'll do a night patrol for old times' sake." And fifty paces away he added in a low voice: "And those are the heroes for whom we fought to make the world free! Oh, boy!"

"And very naice too!" retorted Plessons. "Why, the pore dears might have had to learn the goose step or somethin' awful!"

Then, grabbing Tony's shoulder, he urged him down, whispering—

"Listen!"

Town men never realize the distance sounds carry in the wilds. On the still air came distinctly Sawyer's voice:

"Bah! Yer 've got bats in the belfry, Phil! Why, the poor fish're asking for it! Even left their gats here!"

"Didn't. Left their rifles and took their gats; but——"

"That don't matter. Get em before ——"

"Will you be quiet, you bonehead!" Bodiker replied, tense anger making him raise his tone. "You'll bust the whole game wide open. Haven't you enough mule sense to wait and let those suckers do the work on the stones?"

"Bah!" growled Sawyer in a lower voice. "We kin grab 'em ourselves."

"There you go, you mutt. You wouldn't know a diamond in the ground if you broke your darned nose on it. Neither do I! That's what they're there for. Besides, I think they got more dope out of that dumb nigger than they say."

"I'll make 'em come across, the ——"

The voices became unintelligible.

"Come on, quick!" urged Plessons. "They may have the sense ter look for us against the skyline. Ain't they pa's own little pets?"

"But—but," stuttered Tony, almost unable to believe the obvious inference, "what on earth is the motive?"

"Dunno, but I got a idee that that there dumb bloke got their numbers all right, all right. Did yer know the herrin'-gutted bloke long?"

"No; but he was a great pal of my brother, who disappeared years ago in China."

"Oo-er! Disappeared, did he? Was this duck with him?"

"N-no. I don't think so. Darned if I know! Ah!"

They turned at a shout from Bodiker.

"Hey, Tony! We're sports too! We're coming! Wait!"

"See!" commented Plessons. "Pa's little wonder's scared stiff we'll run orf with the marbles, bless his tender little heart!"

Plessons was right. Evidently greed had overcome fear. Presently the pair joined them, panting in their hurry.

"Is it far?" demanded Bodiker.

"Jus' abaht as far as the cow fahnd it when she jumped over the moon," responded Plessons. Bodiker didn't reply.

* * *

AS THEY toiled on in the keen air suddenly a question born of the interesting conversation overheard, flashed into Tony's mind. Had that hypodermic syringe been charged with quinin? The fellow had been very sick, but it was certainly strange that quinin should kill him instantly. The shot might, as Bodiker had suggested, have been coincident with the death agony, but—! And it was the same syringe that had been prepared for the dying white man whom Bodiker had been so queerly concerned would not die.

Tony recalled the persistent, anxious questions as to whether the old man had spoken and what he had said; and again the startled cry when the sick man had seen Bodiker. Was there any connection between the two facts? Had Bodiker afterward deliberately put the syringe in Tony's case hoping—if it were a poison—that he would have occasion to use it?

Presently the milk of the moon began faintly to wash the eastern stars; and a little later Plessons, breaking trail, stopped and, pointing, said:

"There y'are, lidies and genelmen, the only o-riginal and u-nique African circus hactually used by the hancient emp'rers for their gladia-tors in their scraps with the yeller 'ounds, w'ite-livered curs and other fer-ocious animiles! No hextra charge lidies and genelmen! Pass along, please! Pass along!"

Whether the said gentlemen so playfully referred to failed to hear or whether they were too intoxicated with the wild beauty will never be known.

A moon with the slightest of flattened cheeks was seemingly perched on the crater edge of a volcano some ten miles away, sketching the masses of the raw summit and the slope in liquid, pallid blue and tinting a sister mountain top and the lower hills that spread out fanwise beneath like two trains of courtiers in gauze splashes of silver. Opposite was a group of five other volcanoes, ultramarine against the stars, lumped higgledy-piggledy as if carelessly thrown up to stop the western gap of the two low ranges of hills which roughly formed a vast arena.

The first things that caught the eye away down to the east in the vast depths of the gloom were faint yellow spots like a bunch of stationary fireflies.

As the flood of the moon rose they saw that the mass of tumbled boulders about them ended abruptly a few feet in front and that a steep escarpment shot down at an angle of about 80 degrees into the as yet shadow-veiled valley. A little farther to the west the slope of the hillside, which for some geological reason had resisted the tremendous upheaval, jutted out, descending gradually, suggesting an easy way down until the rising moonlight showed that the end appeared as if it had been bitten off. Like rocks left by a receding tide in a black sea were jungle-covered islets, the original masses of rock and earth as they had fallen during the volcanic convulsion.

"Where's them di'monds?" broke in Sawyer's husky tones.

"Dahn below," explained Plessons. "Yer see, we have ter cut some of them bamboos to maike fishin' rods, and then yer bait 'em with a bit of bluff and then we pore blokes dive dahn and hook on the di'monds while yer two pull 'em up, see? Easy, ain't it?"

Sawyer's face in the moonlight looked like an angry gargoyle.

"See here, yer —— limejuicer, if yer try any more o' that——"

"Oh, shut up, Phil!" said Bodiker, heroically interposing his thin body. "Remember what you promised," he whispered, and Sawyer's dire threats ended in a growl.

"What d'you make of those lights, Plessons?" asked Tony, who was examining them through his glasses. "Village, isn't it?"

"Dunno, Mr. Westlaike. Seems kind of too regular for a village, don't it?"

"But there can't be any whites down there already, can there?" demanded Bodiker anxiously.

"Africa's a funny plaice if yer askin' me. Rivers without water, flahs without smell and shouldn't wonder if there's whites where they didn't oughter be."

"All of which," said Bodiker pleasantly, "means that you don't know."

"How d'you reckon we're going to get down?" inquired Tony. "Doesn't look too steep from here."

"Pretty crumbly, but——"

"Why, what on earth's that?" exclaimed Bodiker, who was also using glasses. "That silvery stuff on the cliff there?"

"Cobwebs," replied Plessons—directly, for a wonder. "Bit farther dahn the cliff is covered with a kinder scrub smothered all over with cobwebs. It' all arahnd, too. Looks queer in the sun like as if some one had upset tins of condensed milk all over the plaice. Never see anythin' like it in me born life!"

"Spiders, eh? Yes, they are! Start about fifty feet down the cliff. Good God!" Bodiker ejaculated suddenly. "What's that?"

Tony took a step forward and gazed intently at the spot indicated in the crook of the jutting cliff.

"Am I drunk, or what?" he cried. "Here, Plessons, look quick!"

"Where? Where?" bawled Sawyer. "Lemme look, Phil!"

"Cripes!" exclaimed Plessons. "Why, there's some more of 'em! But the beggars don't shine— Yus, they do! ——! See that last un? It's got eyes like a flashlight. Nah it's gawn!"

"What d'you make of it?" said Tony.

"Dunno, gov'nor. Never see anythin' like it."

"They were coming up, weren't they?"

"Yus."

"What was it, Alick?" clamored Sawyer.

"I don't know. Didn't look like an animal nor a man. More like— By ——, yes; one of those drawings of a Martian in Wells' stories!"

"Marshan? Who's that guy? Amurrican?" queried Sawyer with a quake in his voice. "Say, I'm off! I ain't going ter butt inter any ghost party. Come on, Alick, fer the love o' ——!"

"I'm going arter them blokes," said Plessons. "Mr. Bodiker, will yer lend me yer rifle?"

"I won't!" snapped Bodiker. "You've got to take us back to camp."

"What!" exploded Plessons angrily; and, bending slightly at the knees, he looked as if he were about to spring and take the rifle by force.

In his eyes was an expression Tony had never seen before; far more deadly than Sawyer's homicidal glare, for there was sane purpose and courage behind it.

"No; come along, Plessons," said Tony gently. "We can pick up their trail tomorrow."

Plessons averted his eyes and said slowly—

"All right, gov'nor."

V

TONY was aware that his own nerves were getting so raggy that he could scarcely control himself; the heel of the brake of a sense of obligation was wearing mighty thin. And the sudden flare-up of the usually imperturbable Plessons was another symptom; he was becoming fed up. The return to camp was made in silence save for one sarcastic comment from the Australian about the inability to shoot spooks with a rifle.

At the "hour of the monkey" Tony and Plessons were up and having coffee before the fire. In a sharp voice Tony warned Bodiker that they were taking the tra

"All right," replied Bodiker meekly, "We'll come." And the two grinned in the firelight at the sleepy muttered curses proceeding from the green tent.

From the crest of the hill where they had stood on the previous night the dewy masses of spider webs sparkled in the rising sun as if a million shawls of gauze covered with tiny sequins had been placed by fairies upon the scrub clinging to the cliffside.

The jutting cape beneath resembled a wedge of cake falling sheer at the tip quite two thousand feet into the vast arena below which, so mysterious in the moonlight, was now dense forest resembling a frozen, choppy sea of brilliant emerald.

"There's some sort of a path there," said Tony after examining the spot where they had seen the mysterious, shining objects. "Come on!"

Scrambling along the rugged crest, they came soon to the jointure of the cape and the hill, where there was an indubitable trail made by human footseps.

"W'ites, them blokes," pronounced Plessons. "And by cripes, look at that! He must be ten feet high!"

He stood pointing to the spoor of a boot a little off the track, which was blurred by many feet—a fresh mark that was at least twenty-odd inches long.

"Giants!" exclaimed Tony. "Oh, rot! There aren't any white giants; and if they were natives they'd be barefoot."

He started down the trail toward the valley. A little farther on, where the slope began and was fairly steep, were rough steps partly cut in the earth and partly built up with stones.

Forty paces down Tony uttered an exclamation of disgust and pulled up to look at the first of the cobwebs. The others clustered about him. The strands, so delicate in ordinary spiders' webs, were as thick as packing thread, strong enough possibly to hold small birds, lizards and rodents.

The webs were spun from one of the bushes, which were something like sage brush, to another, and over them; they seemed to be in triplicate, suggesting, as Plessons had said, that somebody had upset condensed milk.

Toiling with what appeared to be a furious haste were hundreds of the arachnida at respinning damaged traps torn and [illegible]ed in the recent passage of the night. [illegible] revolting-looking creatures they were with bodies as large as a silver dollar and a span of the legs as big as a daddy-long-legs but with much more powerful limbs. The body was pallid yellow with a mottling green resembling gangrened flesh; the beady eyes were jet black and sinister, and the pronounced beak suggested a cross between an octopus and a scorpion.

As Sawyer made a step nearer in his curiosity to a web on the left seven or eight of the horrors came scuttling, seeming to fly so rapid were their movements, to repel the invaders. Sawyer let out a squawk and leaped backward. Almost simultaneously hundreds of others, as if warned by some signal or call, began closing in toward the party.

"Ugh!" grunted Tony and stepped aside smartly as well. "Look out, Plessons; maybe these brutes are poisonous."

"They make me feel sick!" Bodiker complained and then screamed hoarsely, "Oh, God!"

Tony wheeled to see him frantically kicking one leg; then he turned and ran, yelling—

"Look out; they're surrounding us!"

After the ant style, but five feet thick, two columns of the spiders were advancing under cover of the outer scrub and grass, like the claws of pincers, behind the party.

As Tony and Plessons turned to follow, Bodiker, losing his nerve, misjudged the distance and landed right into the middle of them. Beneath his boot squirted red blood. He shrieked and leaped madly for safety, dropping his rifle and scrambling up the cliff, never stopping his cries nor his speed until he had passed Sawyer on the crest. Then, plumping down, he began madly to unlace his left boot.

"What's the matter?" demanded Tony, who had retrieved his weapon. "Bitten?"

"Yes, yes!" gasped Bodiker, as white as quinin, and tore off the sock.

"No, no; he didn't get you," soothed Tony, for although there was a reddish mark on the ankle the skin was not perforated. "But, by ——, what a bite! Look at that, Plessons!"

He held up the boot, showing where the sharp beak of the spider had driven through the tough leather. In the inside was just the slightest puncture.

"My ——," added Tony, suddenly looking up, "I believe they *are* poisonous! Many spiders are. And these are evidently the beasts who bit up the old man and the dumb nigger. Probably they fester rapidly and produce those hideous, stinking pustules of rotting flesh."

"Yus, that's it," agreed Plessons with decision. "Don't yer remember the pore dumb bloke maikin' them funny signs with his hands like a beast running and springing on a fella? That's what he meant all right!"

"Sure; and that's why the old fellow was so anxious about those letters. He knew he was all in—doomed. They must have got bitten coming through here. Lordy," he added, staring at the glitter of deadly gauze, "how are we going to get through?"

"I don't darn well know and I don't darn well care!" put in Bodiker sullenly. "But I'm not going to try."

"Nor this baby neither," contributed Sawyer with decorated emphasis.

For a while there was silence. Bodiker sat nursing his foot, and the others stared vaguely down the valley.

"Rummy!" commented Plessons at last. "Can't maike it aht."

"What?"

"Why, yer see, Mr. Westlaike, why don't them blokes—they're yumans all right—why don't they fire the bush? That'd burn aht these yere pests all right."

"That's true. But how did those men—if they were men—get through last night? Think the beasts don't bite at night? But then the old fellow would have known that. But say, can't we get through that way? Burn em, I mean?"

"Ain't easy. Yer see, it's all right ter start a fire at the bottom and get it ter burn *up;* but it ull be a —— of a job ter get it ter burn *dahn.* Hot air rises, yer know, and that's hotter than ——'s hinges dahn below, so of course it maikes a draft up all the time."

"That's right. But couldn't we burn a track bit by bit and rush through while the ashes are hot?"

"Yus, we could cut a lot of brushwood, and we might—if we didn't get kinder stuck in the middle; then they'd eat us alive, that's what they'd do."

"Ugh!" groaned Bodiker. "I'm not going to try it."

"Yes, they're evidently carnivorous," assented Tony. "And another thing: The fire would give us away to the whole valley —if there are other whites there."

"Yus. But what I wants ter know is how them blokes got through last night, them shiny-heads?"

"But was they yumans?" put in Sawyer. "Seemed kinda funny. No yumans don't have shiny heads and eyes like torches like you said."

"Well, anyhow I'm going ter look," said Plessons. "This yere tracks yuman all right, whether them moonlight mares come along it or not."

"By ——!" exclaimed Tony. "If they were humans we ought to look out. They may have spotted us and come inquiring with a six-gun any time."

"Yus, that's right," agreed Plessons. "Better try this yere trail and see whether they ain't in camp."

"Say, Tony!" protested Bodiker, frantically trying to drag on his boot. "Wait a moment. For ——'s sake don't leave me here alone!"

"Seems to have the wind up," said Plessons *sotto voce.* "Ain't it a pity we can't use him to maike the fire burn!"

Plopp!

Just as he turned to sit down on a rock a bullet splashed beyond him. Simultaneously with the sharp report Plessons and Tony hit the ground as one man. Sawyer stared vaguely in the direction of the sound, remarking—

"Say, that was a shot!"

"Down, you fool" commanded Tony and, springing, pulled him aside and down just as another messenger plunked between them.

"Nah," came Plessons' voice with much satisfaction from behind a rock, "that ain't no bleedin' spider; that's yuman!"

Plopp! came still another bullet just over Tony's head.

"Feels like old times, old scout!" he called out to Plessons. "But that fellow's had his chance and missed it. I guess they must be the mystery beasts of last night and saw us trying out the spiders. Probably thought we'd walk into the trap. See here," he continued to Bodiker, who was lying on his belly flat beneath a large rock, even having left his boot in the open in his haste, "be reasonable and let me take command for a while. I know this game."

"Yes, yes," assented Bodiker eagerly. "Go ahead, Tony. Anything you say."

"Right. Now you and Sawyer stop where you are and—don't forget this—whenever they fire—and sometimes when they don't—blaze away from your rocks, and then each crawl quickly to another and let rip again. Give 'em four shots every time they open fire."

"Sure; but—can't I stop under this rock here?"

"No. You've got to kid them into thinking that there are four of us here. Get the idea?"

"Y-yes."

"And you, Sawyer?"

"Sure," growled Sawyer. "I got yer."

"Plessons and I are going after them—outflank 'em."

"But you won't be long?"

"——, no; And for ——'s sake don't let us down, Alick. Remember they'll get you sure if you do. Give them a parting volley. Now! Come along, Plessons!"

As Tony snaked along, taking cover—and fortunately there was plenty—he felt jubilant; something to fight out in the open, something that was tangible, instead of the subterranean and incomprehensible plotting, was a relief; and afforded, although he wasn't aware of it, a safety valve.

How many they were up against he hadn't the remotest notion. Their mutual plan was to work back and down to the level of the bamboo grove, creep along in the shadow and so take the attackers in the rear.

Again they heard four ragged shots from Bodiker and Sawyer. Their progress was necessarily slow—at least until they got well beneath the crest of the hill.

"Say," whispered Tony to Plessons after a while, "I think there's something funny about those fellows opening fire at long range. Why didn't they stalk up and hold us up?"

"Maybe they hadn't any idea how many we were—same as we don't. But they're mighty rotten shots. We was standin' up like a couple of buffalo, and then they couldn't hit us!"

"Sssh!" warned Tony, peering round a slab of rock. "I believe there's something moving down there. See? In line with the peak of the northern volcano. And I've got a hunch they're trying to play the same stunt as we are! Yes, it *is* moving! And by the lord, the mutt's wearing a white helmet! Dead, boy, dead! Until they walk on top of us!"

"Two!" whispered Plessons a little later.

Lying behind separate ledges of rock they peeked through tufts of grass and scrub, their khaki clothes and *veld* hats blending with the hillside. The two white helmets were as conspicuous as a lantern on a dark night; nor did the owners, evidently confident that their quarry was still on the crest of the hill, take much trouble to conceal themselves, but rushed from boulder to boulder, stooping. In a few minutes they were within fifty yards, and Tony could distinguish the black beard of one, and the pallid, round face of the other, a peasant type.

Just as Tony, remarking that Bodiker hadn't been firing for some while, had put down his rifle and drawn his revolver, he noticed that both of the strangers were exposing themselves recklessly; were almost standing up as they gazed toward the crest.

The falling of a stone and a faint shout made both Tony and Plessons look in the same direction. Between two rocks Tony caught a glimpse of Bodiker's lanky body running directly toward them.

"What in ——'s the fool doing?" he muttered, and then, glancing at the strangers saw the black-bearded fellow in full view, leaning on a boulder leveling his rifle toward Bodiker.

Instantly Tony's revolver flashed. As the man slumped out of sight Plessons' rifle cracked and the fellow's companion wheeled about and dived upon his head.

Rushing toward them, Tony saw Bodiker with Sawyer behind him, and in the former's hand was a white handkerchief.

Quelling his amazement, Tony sprang toward the strangers. They were Germans, both in frayed and patched uniforms. The bigger fellow with a black beard and blue glasses, an officer, had got a forty-five right under his left temple as he had sighted his rifle and was as dead as boiled fowl. The younger man had taken Plessons' rifle bullet through the left temple.

As Tony and Plessons turned about they saw Bodiker staring at them blankly, the handkerchief still in his hand. Behind him stood Sawyer, who, as they looked, snatched at the handkerchief and tried to throw it behind a rock.

"What in ——'re you doing?" demanded Tony angrily as he strode toward them.

"We plugged em! Got 'em kerplunk!" yelled Sawyer as if that explained everything.

"Yes," agreed Bodiker, recovering his tongue. "Sawyer shot him. Only one. A native."

"The bird went right up in the air," continued Sawyer like an excited child. "Come down on his nut, Mr. Westlake, dead'rn yes'day's noos!"

"But," said Tony sharply, "what's that got to do with butting in here with a white flag?"

"Flag?" mumbled Bodiker, peering about stupidly.

"Sure. That white handkerchief—there over on the rock where Sawyer threw it."

"Oh! The handkerchief! Why, you see, Tony," said Bodiker with the air of one patiently explaining the obvious, "we saw them too from the top. Of course we didn't know you were so close, and I thought it would be the best thing to do. Find out who they were, you know, instead of trying to kill each other. And besides, old man, for all we knew they might have got you at any moment. It's always best to be peaceable."

"Bet your life it is!" retorted Tony, trying to fathom what motive was behind the attempt. "If you'd only been so —— peaceable for another ten seconds you'd both have been candidates for tin harps."

"You mean they were going to shoot us—with—with the white flag?"

"Exactly what I do mean." Tony's eyes flashed angrily. "What in —— d'you think they started firing for at first? Because they wanted to kiss you or what? Well, it's no use standing here like a group of stuffed senators. We'd best get busy and see what these fellows have got."

He turned on his heel and walked across to the dead Germans, followed by the others.

"——!" ejaculated Plessons as in moving the officer the smoked glasses rolled off. "Strike me pink if he ain't Ahrenburg! He belonged to that column we chased across Uganda into the laikes. Wex allus wondered what had become of 'em. Cripes! Fancy them hanging arahnd here, still frightened to go home!"

Beneath the frayed tunic patched with *bafta*—trade cloth—which characteristically the Teuton had persisted in wearing even in the equatorial heat, Tony found a broad belt of buckskin in which were wedged round, hard substances.

The others bent expectantly over him as he pried and squeezed out what looked like a greasy stone about the size of a man's thumbnail; a bigger one followed.

"Bah!" growled Sawyer disappointedly. "He was bughouse! What's he want to carry a lot of darned stones for?"

"Stones!" echoed Bodiker. "Why, they're diamonds, aren't they?"

"They are," assented Tony, slipping the two back.

"Hey!" yelled Sawyer, his eyes glittering as Tony began quietly to buckle the belt about his waist. "What're doing?"

"Are you blind?" inquired Tony, looking Sawyer in the eyes as he rose to his feet.

"Shut up, Phil!" commanded Bodiker as usual. "We'll settle all that later."

"We'd better go and see whether they have a camp," continued Tony, "before burying these poor ——s."

They soon hit the trail and, following it, found that within the bamboo grove a path had been cut to a clearing wherein was a hut within a stockade. Squatting before a fire with their backs to the entrance were two natives who did not budge until the whites stood over them.

They too were deaf and dumb.

As the whites walked into the square hut something gleamed in a corner. Tony walked over.

"By ——, here are our moonlight monsters with the giant feet!" he exclaimed and rolled across the floor the headpiece of a diving suit.

"Cripes!" ejaculated Plessons. "What in —— 're they for?"

"Climbing palm tress to collect cokernuts!" retorted Tony, grinning.

"Got me!" said Plessons with a laugh. "But, straight, they're for getting through them spiders so's they can't bite. Must have lugged 'em all the way from that there what'sitsname boat what was sunk in the Tana River. Ain't no flies on them boches!"

VI

THAT the finding of the fortune in diamonds on the dead German had excited Sawyer, and Bodiker as well, almost to the flash point, Tony was well aware. Bodiker was evidently the more cunning: had played the part of the brains, leaving the action to Sawyer when the time came. Probably the pair would have worked in harness in civilization, but the wilds had affected the primitive nature of the latter; he was rapidly getting out of hand, and Bodiker knew it.

Whatever the former motive for the murder plan had been, the present one was easily comprehensible. But Sawyer wanted to rush the work, while his partner, for reasons of cowardice or profit or a mixture of both, wished to delay the actual deed.

Arguing that it was scarcely likely that the two dead men had themselves imported the diving suits from the wreck on the Tana River, which was on the other side of

Uganda, Tony deduced that there would be other whites around. He was determined therefore to hurry the advance into the valley before the possible companions of the dead men, attracted by the firing, might come reconnoitering at the base of the cliff. For all Tony knew they might have other diving suits in which to pass the spider barrier.

As neither Sawyer nor Bodiker was now to be trusted to do what they were told, Plessons went off to the first camp to bring up the boys and send another porter to fetch the main camp below, while Tony, revolver holster handy, prepared breakfast. Bodiker and his man, who were both incapable of cooking, remained in the hut, evidently, from the hum of their voices, plotting the next move. Yet characteristically Tony would not go and eavesdrop.

Again what had been their motive in the white-flag incident puzzled him. Perhaps, he mused, they had had some wildcat scheme of making friends with the strangers and by means of a tale persuading them to assist their plot. A fool idea, but the sort of thing a city crook might be expected to do, grumbled Tony.

That Bodiker would not make any direct attack upon him he was certain—the man was far too much of a poltroon. Sawyer might, but Tony doubted it unless the man was fighting drunk; rather, as Tony read him, would he try to ambush or get Tony while asleep. That the final bust-up was due he was sure, and opined that it would come whenever the discussion of the fate of the diamonds came along; for then Bodiker would no longer be able to control his man, excited as Sawyer would be by so much wealth within reach.

As soon as Plessons came back they bolted food; and, Tony pressing them, purposely exaggerating the danger of delay, they prepared to leave. There were five diving suits, so that they could take but one porter to carry provisions, tent and all fancy stuff having to be left in camp—to Bodiker's indignation.

By the perpetually covert flitting of Sawyer's eyes to him and the belt in particular and by Bodiker's increased nervousness Tony was sure that they had decided on some trick; but just before leaving he took occasion to absent himself and returned with a peculiar grin for Plessons.

They passed the spider barrier without mishap save for Bodiker, who collapsed under the weight and the suffocation of the interior of the suit and had to be carried, to Sawyer's angry disgust, expressed in gestures intimating that they could leave Bodiker there for all he cared. However, they learned that to pass unprotected, even at night when the pests might be less active, would entail being bitten from head to foot as had been the old man and the dumb Swahili, for the spiders attacked in incredible numbers—they seemed to have the power to signal to their fellows far in advance to mass in readiness—swarming over the glass faces of the headpieces.

At the base of the escarpment and well beyond the poisonous area they found another hut in which were frames for the diving suits standing in water to protect them from the ants. These they carefully removed to a hidden spot in the forest. From the jungle emerged a fairly broad path, roughly but sufficiently cut. Otherwise the dense vegetation was impenetrable.

Selecting a convenient spot some way off the trail where they could command a view of any stranger approaching the hut, they cut and trampled a rough arbor in the jungle for the midday rest. About the four whites in sweat-blackened clothes flitted chromatic butterflies and small birds of the humming variety; and amid their unmusical call the twittering of innumerable invisible insects could be heard.

Tony lounged against the bole of a huge tree with his revolver holster on his thigh and Plessons beside him. Opposite sat Bodiker and Sawyer on an aerial root. During the brief meal scarcely a word was said by anybody. Bodiker fed with nervous pecks and upward glances like a timid sparrow eating bread crumbs on a window sill; Sawyer chewed sullenly, unable to prevent his eyes from wandering to the belt about Tony's waist as if to reassure himself that it was there.

Plessons, munching away with a secret grin, seemed highly amused. Tony was not; outwardly calm he was as usual just before a crisis, trembling from head to foot, at pains that they should not notice his fingers when placing food in his mouth.

Suddenly Plessons, with a piece of sardine and bread in his mouth, whipped out his revolver and fired straight over Bodiker's head.

As Tony started and his hand fell on the butt of his gun, Bodiker jumped about two feet in the air with a squawk of fright, and something fell squirming at his feet.

"Bruvver of yours trying ter kiss yer," was Plessons' tart expanation as he pointed to a writhing, headless black mamba on the ground.

"Oh, good God!" breathed Bodiker, hurriedly stepping away. "I— You quite startled me!"

"Didn't yer ma learn yer ter s'y grice arter supper?" demanded Plessons acidly.

Bodiker, sitting down on another root gingerly, stared at him. Sawyer scowled, but returned to his attempt to hypnotize the belt.

"I don't understand."

"Thought a fella would s'y, 'Thanks' if another bloke saived his life—not that it matters, y'know. Allus maiking mistaikes, I am."

"Oh, thanks!" said Bodiker, flushing.

Just then Sawyer sat up on his hunkers as if coming out of a trance.

"Oh, can that bull!" he growled.

He paused, had another look at the belt; seemed to steady himself and said:

"See here, Mr. Westlake, how about them di'monds?"

At the words there was a visible tautening of nerves and sinews all around.

"Sure," assented Tony quietly and aimiably. "When we get back we'll find out who are the heirs of our German friend and hand them over to them, of course. Don't you——"

"WHAT'S that?"

The words were a hoarse scream of rage much as a wounded gorilla might be supposed to utter, stoppered in the dank gloom of the forest by the interwoven branches and parasitic creepers which shut out the sun.

Sawyer had sprung to his feet, forgetting his gun, for he was by nature a "strong-arm" man; his powerful arms were curved and his bull head lowered; the small eyes were bloodshot with passion; sweat dripped from his chin.

"Y-you're crazy, you ——!"

He straightened up as if slapped in the face as the blue muzzle of Tony's revolver peeked up at him.

"You say that again, Sawyer, without smiling and— Get me?"

Sawyer choked, swallowed and dashed sweat out of his eyes.

"You— I—" he spluttered. "You're crazy! What're you giving us anyway? It's as much Alick's as yours and—we won't stand for it."

"I said," repeated Tony, sliding the gun into the holster, "that these diamonds don't belong to us. They belong to the man who found them. That's what I said, and that's all there is to it."

"But ye're bughouse, ye're crazy!" recommenced Sawyer, who was rocking his great bulk from one foot to the other like an elephant with the toothache. "We took it off him——"

"I did," reminded Tony, "and incidentally saved your lives."

"You're dippy. Ain't he a boche? What in ——"

"What's that got to do with it? The war's over."

"Listen, Phil," began Bodiker, the peacemaker. "Tony's right. And anyway we'll get plenty——"

"You shut yer head!

A backhanded swipe with the right arm knocked Bodiker off his root.

"See here, Dutchy," he snarled, wiping blood from his mouth as he scrambled up, "I'll put you back in the pen for this, you——"

"You, yer long —— runt! That's where you oughta been if yer hadn't planted it on me, yer dirty ——. Think I did near two year fer a lousy five thousand while you was rubbering round wit' all the swell Janes on Broadway? Guess ye're got another think coming! And now yer want ter let this bird get away wit' that raw stuff! You keep yer face shut!"

Then in a fresh access of anger:

"If yer spit another word I'll spill the beans and let yer buddys know what ”

"Shut up! Oh, shut up!" squealed Bodiker, not in rage but in terror. "For God's sake, Phil!"

His eyes shuttled wildly between Tony and Sawyer.

"See here, Phil," he continued wheedlingly, "you're all shot to pieces. You don't know what you're saying. Come outside—I mean over there—and I'll explain what Mr. Westlake means."

Sawyer's eyes, still smoldering, glanced doubtfully at Tony and Plessons, hands resting slightly on their ready guns. Slowly he turned toward Bodiker.

"All right," said he, "and I'm going ter show yer where *you* get off. I ain't going ter stand fer none of this Y. M. C. A. stuff."

Once more his eyes returned to the beloved belt; then he grunted and followed Bodiker a bit along the trail. Tony and Plessons looked at each other.

"Give a fool enough rope and he'll allus hang hisself," commented Plessons amiably, squeegeeing sweat from his forehead with two fingers.

"Yes, they both seem to have had a classical career. At Sawyer I'm not surprized, but the other's new on me. Wonder what it was?"

"Oh, nothin' serious. Murderin' an ol' widder or snippin' pigtails orf flappers goin' to school. Somethin' taisty. But yer'd better sleep with yer gun full cock nah, gov'nor. That slab-sided bloke means ter get us both for them sparklers."

"Yes," agreed Tony, likewise removing perspiration. "That's understandable. I could kick myself when I think of how I fell for that Bodiker. Yet he certainly seemed a —— good fellow and —— generous. Of course that was part of the con game to kid me along. Yet I can't understand why I didn't see through it."

"Like me muvver used to s'y when I wus no bigger than a horse bucket. 'Jack,' says she, 'in love and business yer've gotter be a good liar and a good thief ter get on in this world, else yer won't never know what the other bloke's trying to do ter yer.' That's right, gov'nor. My pa busted a wonderful career by pal-ing up to a little Judy. Didn't get what she was arter. Well, he got hanged fer bushrangin', and she got the reward. There y'are! Fine man too!"

"My pet cootie, as we used to say in the army," said Tony, "that keeps me awake o' nights is what on earth they were after before?"

"Dunno neither, gov'nor. But—they *was* and *is!*"

"I know it! But what in —— can I do? I can't shoot 'em down in their tracks, and I can't well disarm 'em in a country like this. You see, Plessons, I've been up against it all along because it was Bodiker who put up the money for this outfit. But there are limits. And I think I'm justified in—well, kicking and then some, now that I'm convinced that for some incomprehensible reason Bodiker had meant to get me—even before the diamonds came along.

"By the way," he added with a sunny smile, "I haven't got the diamonds. Hid 'em in the bamboo grove. There's only grass in the belt. Too heavy to carry."

"Why didn't you tell 'em?"

"Because I —— well wouldn't!" Tony grinned. "Besides, I wanted it to draw fire and see what they would do, and I think it's about due now. Listen!"

Above the forest chatter they could distinguish the hum of voices, mostly the bass tones of Sawyer. Very evidently a stormy session was in progress. Came an explosion of profanity on Sawyer's side followed by a muffled cry that was snapped.

"Eh, *Wangie*," said Plessons quickly to the porter, "go to the hut and stop there. *Enda kerchima* (go quickly). *Enda!*"

"You're right," whispered Tony, listening intently; "he's either killed brother Bodiker or has put him out, and is coming whooping on the warpath. Listen! Sounds like a troop of elephants!"

"I s'y, gov'nor," suggested Plessons, "let's slide in through the back and see what his nibs is up to."

As he turned he snatched off his Tirai hat, and stuck it on a branch about where they had been sitting. Tony, grasping the idea, whisked off the belt and flung it across an aerial root. Then swiftly they slipped through the tangled screen of creepers into the jungle behind them, lying down so that they could command a clear view of the arbor, having no fear that Sawyer, city bred, could read the signs.

The crashing of furious steps dwindled, but to the watchers' *veld* trained ears the advance of a clumsy body was as plain as if they could see it. Even came a distinct muttered curse as the stalker got his feet entangled in a vine, making Plessons laugh silently.

Apparently it never occurred to the circus Indian that he could not hear voices talking as they normally should be. Presently they distinguished his head worming through a screen of creepers and his rifle being pushed in front. He stopped suddenly as if suspicious or puzzled. The head moved first one way and then another, evidently trying to locate them.

Then as if satisfied by the sight of the hats the rifle came up.

With the crash of the shot, which struck the bole of the tree beneath the hat, Sawyer, who had apparently painfully figured out his plan and what the enemy would do, leaped sidewise and down.

For all of a minute or two he remained there, convinced that he was completely hidden in the jungle.

Bar squawks of disturbed parrots nothing happened. The hum and twitter of the forest settled down to normal. Presently two round, small eyes in a red face rose cautiously and peered through the interstices. The lips moved eloquently. The head rose still higher until he could see clear into the arbor.

An oath lurid and lewd enough to shock the morals of the forest beasts preceded an elephantine spring toward the tree, where, still rumbling curses, he stood glaring about him. The expression of balked greed and wounded vanity was so comic that both the silent watchers nearly choked with suppressed laughter.

The seeking ape eyes caught sight of the belt. The non-thinking reaction was a grab like a starving monkey at a nut. Then at the feel of the softness within a ludicrous expression of dreadful anguish shot into the eyes as with frantic fingers Sawyer tore open the belt.

Literally bellowing with rage, he flung the coveted belt on to the ground and stamped on it, glaring madly about as he did so, mouthing incoherent curses.

Then with an oath he turned and plunged out of the hole.

There followed a guttural command to halt, the vicious crack of a Mauser, a cry and the cessation of the crashing of bushes.

VII

AN OATH preceded commands in German. Following on the trodden trail into the arbor, there appeared a short, thick-set man with a blond beard in a patched uniform, a Mauser pistol in his hand. Behind the officer were two rankers, cadaverous of features, and several black soldiers.

"—— ——!" growled the blond beard in German. "There are no more of the English pigs. *Ach*, that one has left his hat."

Another white came up behind him and saluted.

"What shall be done with the prisoner, *Excellenz?* He is wounded in the leg and unconscious."

"Good! Take him to the rest house. Is the tall one wounded or dead?"

"Dead, *Excellenz.* His companion seems to have killed him with his fist. He is a strong one, that. Undoubtedly they quarreled, yet neither has any diamonds."

"Good. Perhaps Ahrenburg shot the other pigs if there were any, but he must be court martialed for letting these enter the valley. Throw this pork into the jungle. It is a pity, for he would have been perhaps a good specimen for the *Herr Doktor.* Go. I want my lunch."

They stamped away in the direction of the hut.

"See?" whispered Plessons. "They haven't tumbled that we're here."

"So much the better. Sawyer must have struck Bodiker mighty hard!"

"Them sparklers have driven him clean mad. I say, gov'nor, that bloke's the Kommandant von Muhlhauser himself. Pretty foxy cove he useter be. We chaised him from hole ter hole, but we never fahnd this plaice."

"How d'you know?"

"Lumme, I wus scaht and I useter crawl frough their lines," returned Plessons as if that were nothing in particular.

"We'd better be getting a move on," said Tony.

"Yus. Maike fer the hill and work along between the spiders and the forest."

Thus they did, almost noiselessly gliding through the fringe of the jungle until they reckoned that they were far enough away to discard caution. Steep going they found among the broken, forest-covered débris at the base of the escarpment, and as hot as a boiler room of a liner in the Red Sea.

On their passage they saw no spoor of game; no sign of life of any sort except birds, lizards, snakes and insects. Mosquitoes, even before the sun set, attacked them in clouds. The *Mbwa* (dog) fly, which flies no higher than a big dog, chewed their wrists and ankles. The false twilight of the hidden valley had begun before they caught sight of the settlement, the lights of which they had seen the previous night.

The site was on a small plateau at the base of one of the volcanoes, the ground running up from light jungle to scrub where about a hundred feet higher glowed the spider belt, which evidently formed a band at the same altitude right around the landlocked valley. On examination through the glasses in the swiftly fading glow of a flamingo sunset, Tony was astonished to see a cluster of huts, what appeared to be a village of some size, exhibiting a good deal of activity. Clearly in the lower dusk he could distinguish a black, white and red blob at the top of a palm trunk, and as they looked a trumpet call rang out and the pre-war flag came fluttering down.

Between the station and the main jungle, which ended as abruptly as a fence, was a low, open space looking like the bed of a dried-up river pocked with pits from which ran wires, gleaming like a spider's web, up to the lip of the plateau. Unable to guess what they could be, Tony handed the Zeiss to Plessons, who after one look exclaimed:

"Sufferin' Moses, if that ain't the ruddy limit!"

"What? What?"

"W'y, look, gov'nor! Them holes yer see in the grahnd're di'mond pits! Them blokes must have half a hundred or more black fellas working for 'em. Must be blue clay or I'm a liar! Blimey! It's a young Kimberley already, that's what it is! 'Struth! Did yer see up there on the right?"

He switched the glasses swiftly about.

"That's it. This here must have been a river afore them volcanoes busted out and blocked both ends of the valley."

He stared perplexedly.

"Did yer notice that long shed up there? If that ain't a sorting shed I'll eat me bloomin' boots! Yer see, they dig in the clay, shove it inter baskets and haul it up on them wire stays to the plateau, where it's broken up and all the di'monds picked aht. See, there's the dump jus' ter the left. Crumbs! They must have a dozen fortunes there by the look of it; and fifty more in the grahnd. Look, there's von Muhlhauser comin' back—does hisself well in a *machila* (hammock) my oath!—and our maite." He laughed. "Looks pretty sick if yer arsk me—ol' slab-sides!"

"Then the whole column must have remained here instead of giving themselves up after the Armistice," said Tony. "But it's funny none of the British hit on this place. But say; d'you recollect that yarn that explorer in the Congo told us about an American who disappeared somewhere about here? That would be their game. Wouldn't dare let anybody go, in case they gave 'em away!"

"Yus, that's abaht it. The old feller what died must have broke away, but the spiders got him. Cripes! That's why the blighters don't burn the spider belt. That's their barbed-wire entanglement to keep the prisoners in!"

"But the prisoners could fire the belt themselves," suggested Tony.

"Yus; but the fire itself would give 'em away. The boches would be arter 'em and shoot 'em dahn before they had half a chance ter burn a path."

"That's right," Tony had to admit. "Pretty tough proposition unless they could find the diving suits. If what you say is right, Plessons, they must have a colossal fortune here; and they're sending it out, too, judging from that belt on that fellow." He laughed softly. "If Sawyer gets wise to this he'll go plumb crazy! —— the skeeters!"

"Me, too," agreed Plessons. "Best thing ter do is ter get back there in the jungle and light a smudge fire and go fossackin' arahnd that there camp with the moon. We'll want food anyway since that blasted boche pinched the porter."

* * *

IT WAS now pitch dark save for the stars. Crawling cautiously, they made their way back a few hundred yards, where in a small cañon between two masses of the ancient débris they trampled another cavern in the dense undergrowth and made a tiny fire, the greenwood smoke of which served as some defense against the mosquitoes.

With the first glow of the moon they were on their way, still hugging the hillside where the growth was thinner. It took about two hours of difficult going to make the verge of the plateau, where they arrived covered in sweat and blood from pests and bushes. Fortunately the twittering hum of the night life, augmented by a frog chorus, helped to smother the crashing of branches and occasional stumbles over the uneven ground.

The whites' quarters, which they could distinguish in the moonlight, were built in parallel lines like barracks and were commodious enough to house a few hundred men. Lights were burning in only two square huts, one standing by itself at the head of the street, and the other nearer the hillside.

A fact in the trespassers' favor was the absence of the pariah dogs usually attached to every native village. As they approached the bank of the butte they saw strutting up and down with a tired precision a native soldier, ghostly in the light of the pallid moon. They halted to confer. Watching, they observed that at every turn—not regularly, for sometimes he stopped and leaned wearily on his rifle—the sentry wheeled about right on the edge of the bank, which at that point was fairly densely covered with scrub.

Creeping on their bellies, they succeeded in reaching the base undetected and, waiting until the man paused at the end of his patrol, rushed up and lay hidden on the lip of the plateau. After another turn he halted on the edge and stood mooning across at the forest.

Leaving their rifles, simultaneously Plessons grabbed his feet and pulled them from under him as Tony sprang. A grunt was knocked out of him by the fall, and then a sharp tap of a revolver barrel put him to sleep.

Having securely bound and gagged him, they rolled him down the bank into thicker undergrowth and sneaked across to the back of the nearest lighted hut. With Teuton thoroughness the refuse clay had been utilized to make the bricks which paved the floor of the wide veranda. The large windows were covered by stretched cheesecloth, allowing light and air to circulate. Gruff voices in conversation sounded as they stealthily approached the window at the back and from each side were able to peer within.

Evidently the hut was the officers' mess. From the middle hung a paraffin lamp of the usual store pattern. At one end of the long table covered with colored *bafta* sat the thickset blond man, von Muhlhauser. He was bald.

By his side was another man cadaverous of features with prominent cheek bones and high-power spectacles; the short-cropped skull seemed almost flat on the top, suggesting an inverted soup tureen, and his ash-colored beard was twisted to one side like a tree in a trade wind, caused by his habit of nervously tugging at it with the left hand. Both these men—Mulhauser had changed—wore white uniforms which looked spotlessly clean. Three younger officers, all haggard of features, were also present wearing patched clothes.

At the far end was the sergeant who had accompanied the *Kommandant* and another non-commissioned officer; and between them stood Sawyer, truculent of jaw but loose-lipped, huge shoulders lopsided as he carried his bulk on one leg.

"Dunno," Sawyer was saying sullenly in reply to some question. "They was sitting under the tree there last I seen of 'em."

"*Ach,* we will them haf tomorrow. Dey gan not egscape. You, vot dat ol' man he tell you?"

"Didn't tell me nothing. Died before he could spill the beans—so they says."

"Der beans?" queried the *Herr Kommandant* irritably.

"Before he could tell the story," interpreted the sergeant in German.

"*Ach!*" interrupted the man with the crystal glasses. "Vot condition der man vas?"

"Mighty bad, doc," returned Sawyer. "Covered with them running sores."

"Could der man ven you him catch talk?"

"The Aussie said he couldn't, but he's a darned liar. I dunno."

"You t'ink dat he talk, isn't it?" from von Muhlhauser.

"Sure, he could talk all right. The three of 'em had a frame-up. We weren't suckers."

"Frame-up! Suckers? Vot is dat?"

"Trying to put one over," growled Sawyer.

"Speak English, pig," grunted the sergeant, roughly jerking Sawyer's arm.

"Tried to cheat," amended Sawyer sullenly.

"How dat you know?" demanded von Muhlahuser.

"Because that lime-juicer—Australian—knew how to find this valley, but when they saw it they got scared and waited for us."

"*Ja?*"

"We lamped—we saw your fellers coming in the moonlight, and them two lay for 'em and shot 'em under the white flag."

"You say dat my men der vite flag haf?" growled von Muhlhauser.

"Your fellers nothing," protested Sawyer hastily. "Him and me put up the white flag."

"Vot dey do den?"

"Grabbed the di'monds. And I said we'd better play on the level, and then them fellers went off their nuts and wanted to start something," asserted Sawyer. "I give them the dope to lay off of that raw stuff, but as soon as we got down in the valley the lime-juicer tried to get Bodiker."

"Get Bodiker?"

"Sure. Shoot him."

"*Ja.* We von shot hear vich tell us vere you are, isn't it?"

"They both pulled their gats and Bodiker quit cold," continued Sawyer, warming up to the story. "And then I wanted to go after them, but Bodiker ain't got the guts and so I soaked him good, the stiff."

"Speak English, pig!" commanded the sergeant and smashed his fist across Sawyer's mouth. "You talk so der *Excellenz* understand."

Sawyer growled curses as he wiped the blood which began to trickle from his mouth.

"I hit him," he snarled.

"So? *Ach*, you der diamonds not vant to haf! You to der childer and der vife of der man you haf murder vish to send dem, isn't it?" sneered von Muhlhauser.

"It was that Westlake guy shot yer officer."

"So? Dot vot you say! Dot joost vot all der —— *Engländer* say! Nefer dey der money vant, der land nefer! To der beople dey to do goot vish so hard——"

"Ain't English," cut in Sawyer. "American."

"*Ja?* And your bad friends English are, isn't it?"

"Dat is notting, *Herr Kommandant*," put in the *Professor Doktor* with the crystal glasses. "All der same *schwein* are!"

"They are worse, *Herr Doktor*," said the *Kommandant* in German. "If it hadn't been for the —— Vilson we would have eaten the Allies! *Ja.* But this pig will make a good specimen for you, *Herr Professor Doktor!*"

"*Nein*," snorted the *doktor*, rising and going round the table. "He has the heart of a hyena and the brains of a sheep. Gentlemen, I will demonstrate."

As he put up powerful but sensitive hands, the hands of a surgeon, Sawyer shrank. The *Doktor* swore at him gutturally and, half-turning his own massive head toward his compatriots, ran his fingers over his victim's skull, standing in a professorial attitude, treating his subject as if he were a plaster cast.

"This," he went on, still in German, with one hand on Sawyer's bullet head, "has no trace of the Nordic. There is the rotundity of the Alpine mixed with the Celt. Only asset is a low cunning. Flat skull, low order of the brachycephalic. A poor specimen of class F 3."

Tony nudged Plessons, and they quietly withdrew. In the moonlight Tony saw that Plessons was grinning.

"Pretty poor liar, isn't he?" Tony whispered when they were at a safe distance. "Even couldn't fool that boche! Now see here, Plessons, I learned a little trick back in France. Whenever the colonel—and he was a wise old bird—learned Fritz was getting busy to start something he'd hit first whether we were ready or not, and nine times out of ten we pulled it off. Maybe the trick's as old as the Trojan horse, but it seems good to me.

"We've got the local All Highest and his principal pal boxed in there. Haven't a ghost of a notion how many men or perhaps machine guns they've got, but I've a hunch that if we can jump those two we can do some talking. How about it?"

"That's the bloomin' ticket!" assented Plessons heartily. "If we wite till termorrer they'll have us on the run, and——"

"What's that?" interrupted Tony.

From somewhere in or near the camp had risen a moaning, stifled shriek with the hoarse quality of pain.

"What the —— Ugh!" exclaimed Tony. "Reminds me of a field hospital!"

"Yus," agreed Plessons. "I'd like ter maike the hounds what slit them niggers' tongues 'owl like that! Come on, gov'nor!"

VIII

"HANDS up!"

For the falling of an eggshell to the floor there was silence.

Peering incredulously at the muzzle of a revolver in the hands of a stocky, grizzled man against the oblong of sapphire which was the open door, the *Herr Doktor* stood beside the staring sergeant with one hand already in the air upon the skull of Sawyer, whose jaw had fallen. A beam of moonlight through the window and the glow of the lamp turned the heads into three masks in silver and gold.

The officers' cropped heads, immediately beneath the light, resembled three ripe and yellow gooseberries. At the far end of the table von Muhlhauser's eyes bulged above his brazen beard like two fat fish swimming beneath the crags of his bushy eyebrows. One hand, sparkling with rings, stuck out, arrested in a gesture.

"The lamp!"

The *Kommandant's* yell was as the touch upon a secret spring loosing mechanism into mad activity.

As simultaneously two officers and the sergeant grasped and began to obey the order, two revolvers spat twice each. At the first double discharge one man with a broken wrist dropped his gun; another slumped back into his chair, shot through the head.

At the second the *Kommandant's* whirled chair smashed the lamp; somebody swore gutturally; somebody grunted.

For a moment the beam of the moon stabbed across darkness upon the back of von Muhlhauser's bald skull, to leap back to the window as if terrified as the body of the lamp crashed on the table and burst into flames.

"Get the doc!" yelled Tony to Plessons; and, fearing to kill the *Kommandant*, dropped his rifle, sprang and swung his left on to the bearded jaw as von Muhlhauser was grabbing for his revolver belt, which had fallen off the chair back.

As Tony continued the motion to give the *Kommandant* a quietus with the revolver barrel, a bullet crashed into the wall above his stooping back. Whirling, he knocked up the third officer's muzzle and saw the man's face split redly in the flame of his gun. Then, swinging about, he tapped the head of the *Kommandant* just as the latter had wriggled around and grabbed his own revolver.

Another shot crashed in the confined space; and, turning, Tony saw in the light of the flaming tablecloth the officer with the broken wrist dive through the doorway after a bullet from Plessons had caught him through the shoulder blades.

Grabbing von Muhlhauser's fallen revolver and placing a foot on his stomach, to give warning when he regained consciousness, Tony looked about him.

His gaze took in the body of the sergeant slumped across a chair with his face smashed in from a vicious blow from Sawyer, who stood in the corner strapping the *Doktor's* hands with his belt. Just then Plessons leaped and, snatching the blazing cloth and the wreck of the lamp, hurled them outside. They alighted on top of the wounded officer, who half rose to his feet, scrambled a couple of yards and collapsed as yells and the sound of running boots arose.

The rough table made of logs sawn in half was already saturated with paraffin and afire. Seizing two legs, Tony tried to overturn it, but the legs would not budge for they were set in the ground, the table top being merely laid upon four posts; so, yelling to Sawyer to grab his end, they ran it through the door, where luckily it fell upside down on the wreckage of the lamp, partially extinguishing the flames, just as Plessons, firing from the end window, dropped two of the soldiers rushing up in the moonlight. Then as Tony joined in from the door, sending another man to earth, the others turned about and with oaths and yells made for shelter.

"Yah!" shouted Sawyer triumphantly. "We'll put it all over em, the ——!"

And in his exuberance he planted a boot in the prostrate sergeant's ribs so vigorously that it brought the latter to life. Seemingly in one motion, he had his arms around Sawyer's legs, bringing him crashing to the ground.

"Aie-e!" squalled Sawyer as they heaved together. "Mind my leg, can't yer, yer ——!"

"Shut up," commanded Tony, "or I'll tap you on the head. Listen; what's that, Plessons?"

Above the grunting and cursing on the floor rose a queer muffled sound, a kind of hoo-hooing from outside the camp.

"Why it's them dumb fellas hee-hawing!" exclaimed Plessons. "Gettin' excited abaht——"

A sharp crack, preceding a fusillade, interrupted him. Several bullets *whee'd* through the cheese cloth window frame and others smacked against the outside of the walls, which were fortunately double bricked.

"I'll kill yer, yer ——" Sawyer was grunting from the ground.

"Here, Plessons, help pry those mutts loose," Tony snapped angrily. "That fellow will do to interpret. My German isn't strong."

Fumbling in the dark hurriedly, they both tore away arms, swore when they discovered they were operating on the same man while the other did his best to choke him, and finally dragged them apart. A revolver muzzle in the pit of the stomach quieted the guttural spitting sergeant, and he allowed himself to be tied. In the mean time several more fusillades had whistled through, and smacked against, the hut.

"Quick! Take that window, Sawyer, and cut out that sob stuff. Here's a gat. Watch they don't rush the door, Plessons, and I'll stir up the All Highest."

He turned just in time. As the *Kommandant* was crawling through the door Tony leaped, seized him by the leg, dragged him back like a pig without the squeals, and poked a revolver against his ear. But von Muhlhauser, possibly guessing his captor's reluctance to shoot, silently tried to fling himself on Tony.

But he had started too near the ground for a fair chance, so that Tony easily twisted him off his feet, got him down and knelt on his stomach while Plessons tied him to one of the table posts.

"He's got guts, all right," admitted Tony as he arose panting.

The independent firing had ceased at a gruff command in German. The strange hoo-hooing continued.

"Yes," agreed Plessons, "they didn't cave in like some of 'em do."

"Prussians, shouldn't wonder. They're mean, but they aren't white-livered. Listen! Guess some officer or non-com's pulling 'em together. But I bet we've got 'em puzzled. They'll know who it is, but probably won't know how many. Sawyer, drag out the professor and let's have a look at him. That's it."

"Help! Help!" promptly yelled the *Doktor* in German at full-lung pressure.

"Heh," growled Sawyer, "shut yer head, will yer?"

"Let him be," said Tony. "That's just what we want—to let them know he's alive. Go to it, professor!"

But the professor, understanding English, refused to comply.

"Now you, sergeant," continued Tony, addressing the big form looming in the gloom, "tell your people that we're going to stick you and the professor in the windows and the *Kommandant* in the door, so if any one shoots they'll get them. Understand?"

"*Ja*," answered the sergeant; "but I gan not do dat until the *Herr Kommandant* gommand me."

"Oh yer won't, won't yer——"

"For ——'s sake, shut up!" exclaimed Tony furiously. "You're worse than a hysterical old woman. Keep your mouth shut until you're told to speak."

"What're yer giving us? Ain't I——"

"Plessons, put a bullet through that fool if he butts in again. Now, sergeant, your *Kommandant* isn't talking just now——"

"Sergeant," came von Muhlhauser's voice in German, giving Tony the lie, "tell *Herr Oberleutnant* that he is to consider us dead and to charge, putting each of these men to to the sword instantly—no matter what the cost, for this valley must be saved for the Fatherland. D'you hear?"

"*Ja, Excellenz*," assented the sergeant in a deep, grave tone.

"But they will slay *me!*" broke in the *Herr Doktor*. "And what then will become of the future?"

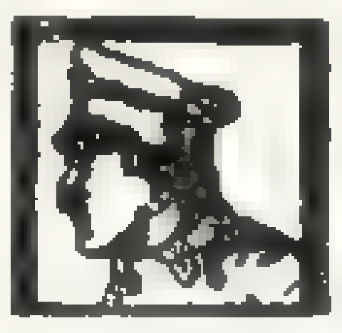
"Silence!" commanded von Muhlhauser sternly.

"Gag that man—quick!" snapped Tony.

"*Herr Oberleutnant Schnitzel!*" the sergeant had begun in stentorian tones when Plessons' fingers quashed the rest while Tony rammed a handkerchief into the *Kommandant's* mouth.

"What were they gassin' abaht?" queried Plessons as he completed his job.

"They've got sand," said Tony gravely. "But we can't take fancy chances. What the —— are they up to now?"



A HAIL from without brought him to the edge of the door. The wounded officer had crawled away.

"What are your orders, *Excellenz?*" repeated the voice in German.

"*Herren Excellenz, Doktor*, and the sergeant are our prisoners," shouted Tony in broken German. "Come—come— What in ——'s negotiate?—come to talk!"

"Who are you?"

"American explorers."

Interrupting them came another swirl of hoo-hooing louder than before and at the tail the single hoarse scream.

"You must surrender," came another German voice but in English. "You are entirely surrounded. We have a machine gun—*ja*, two!"

"That doesn't matter. We have three prisoners—your chief as well."

"That is not regulations of war. You gan not shoot prisoners. I haf been in America."

"Cripes!" muttered Plessons. "Ain't he saucy?"

"Shouldn't talk so much about that, Fritz," retorted Tony. "And this isn't war anyway. You're just bandits. This isn't your territory, and you attacked us and shot one of our men without provocation. Also you've got another American here. Now come across if you know so darned much about the States."

Came a pause and the hum of voices disputing, the while the hoo-hooing continued.

"Vot you vant?" the interpreter shouted.

"The release of any white prisoners you may have and the handing over of this property to the proper authorities; and," he added, quickened to sudden heat by memories, "the freeing of these poor ——s you've mutilated. And take your medicine. That's that. Get me?"

"You go to ——, you dirty Yank!" bawled the voice.

"Fine!" responded Tony savagely. "But you'll have to come and send me!"

"——, ain't he the lad?" commented Plessons. "Don't you fink his ma learned him properly!"

"Bull," growled Sawyer.

"That's enough," snapped Tony. "Get to your window, Sawyer."

Obediently Sawyer hopped on his one leg to his post. Guttural talking was going on beyond the huts on the other side of the street. Again rose that queer, hoarse scream like a madman in pain, and to the persistent murmur of the hoo-hoo was added the strange clinking of metal.

"*Herr Amerikan!*" hailed the officer who had first addressed them.

"Hello!"

"If you will surrender we will allow you to go free," he continued in German. "You understand?"

"*Ja*, I understand, lieutenant," replied Tony in English. "Tell him, you hyphen American, that we don't surrender on any terms but our own."

A mumble of voices and then—

"The *Herr Leutnant* says," came again the interpreter's voice, "we shall gome and take you, and if the brisoners are injured you shall dig your graves, *ja!*"

"And very naice, too!" commented Plesson's *sotto voce*, "and I'll bet him half a quid they'll do the diggin', my oath!"

"Come right along!" bawled Tony. "Only be careful you don't shoot your own men and say we massacred 'em!"

Then, untying von Muhlhauser's bonds which fastened him to the table post, Tony dumped him in the corner on the door side, saying:

"Say, Plessons, see those other two fellows are in the opposite corner, will you? They can't possibly get winged there."

"Righto, gov'nor!" assented the Australian.

"But say, Mr. Westlake," butted in Sawyer, not so fresh this time, "ain't yer going ter stick 'em in the winders like yer said?"

"Of course not," retorted Tony. "That was only bluff."

"But them Huns did it wi' women and chil——"

"Shut up!" snapped Tony. "What in —— d'you know about it anyway?"

"He's finkin' of the cinema what he's seen," said Plessons with a laugh.

For once Sawyer had no comeback save an inarticulate grunt.

"I'll take the door, Plessons, and you'd better take the two windows. Guess they'll get us anyway by one of 'em if they do rush us. And just one thing. If we're out of luck—get this, Sawyer—don't let 'em take you prisoner."

"I'm wiv yer, gov'nor!"

"——!" was Sawyer's succinct comment.

Then, preceded by a slight commotion in the corner, suddenly a voice broke.

"Schnitzel!" roared the *Kommandant* in German. "Charge for God and the Kaiser!"

Profiting by the movement in his removal to safety, von Muhlhauser had worked loose his gag. As Tony leaped to replace it there came an answering shout.

"I wish I knew how many men they've got," remarked Tony conversationally as he gathered up his revolvers.

"What's the odds, gov'nor!" said Plessons from his window. "Nah then, this is where the bloomin' balloon goes up!" he added, and as a sharp, guttural command rang out he opened fire. "Wop! Got yer, ol' dear! Ev'ry time—yer hits—Aunt Sally—yer gets—a coker nut!"

From each of five opposite huts on the street darted four or five men, belching scarlet flashes as they ran.

Tony, from one side—he would have been shot to pieces had he stood in the door—emptied both revolvers and clubbed his rifle. As they closed in he yelled to Plessons, who, grabbing another rifle, leaped for the other side of the door.

"Bat 'em as they come!" gasped Tony. "Get us—anyway—from the window!"

Then just as the foremost of the charging soldiers butted foolishly together in the doorway and were shot and clubbed, there rose above a hoo-hooing which resembled a rising gale at sea an indubitable American voice, yelling:

"Attaboy! Get 'em, you black ——s!"

Guns crashed amid red flames in the doorway against agitated black figures silhouetted by the moon-greened western sky. Forms plunged forward into the room beneath Tony's rifle butt. Sweat blinded his eyes.

He struck empty air; heard Sawyer's revolver crash behind him and Plessons swear.

Then his left arm sagged; he found himself leaning gasping against the doorpost and was conscious that the night was filled with a strange, hoarse screaming.

Intermittent flashes of guns came from small groups, about which black gnomes leaped in a fantastic dance, flourishing flat things that flashed dully in the moonlight.

Of a sudden the world began to rock; a tall, bearded white was weaving up and down on the billows of the ground toward him, and Plessons at a great distance was saying—

"Cripes, them pore dumb blokes has been and gawn and turned on em!"

EPILOG

"IT'S all right, gov'nor," Plessons was saying. "One on 'em got yer from the back winder—under yer left shoulder blade and frough yer ribs. Lorst a lot of blood, yer did, and me too. Got me in the thigh, blast 'em. But I pushed his ugly dial in with a bullet. These two gents—" as Tony's eyes bewilderedly regarded a tall, blond-bearded man and a short, red-bearded one— "Mr. Boulters and Mr. Vansittart, they kinder shoved in ter help along."

"But the—these dumb blacks turned on the boches, didn't they?" inquired Tony recalling his last memory.

"Sure they did," said the tall man," and mighty glad to get their own back, believe me!"

"Say, aren't you American?" asked Tony.

"Sure I'm American," laughed the other man, Vansittart. "And this red —— here's English, Dr. Peter Boulters."

"But how did you get here? The spiders, I mean, and——"

"We were here already—very much so in fact," returned Boulters. "But that's a long yarn and ——"

"Say, where," exclaimed Tony, anxiously peering around the room, which was empty save for the three men and Sawyer lying on blankets near him," where are the *Kommandant* and the *Doktor*?"

"Oh, they're all right," assured Vansittart. "Roped and hog-tied in the next hut, ready to turn over to the authorities when they arrive to take charge of everything. None of the others left. There was no holding 'em once those dumb black —— got going good. They massacred every darn one, and I can't blame 'em! And they would those others as well if we hadn't have stood over them."

"Feelin' better?" inquired the English doctor. "I patched you up, you know."

"Thanks; feeling fine!" replied Tony. "Except mighty thirsty."

"Good. Then you barge along and tell your end of the yarn, and we'll get things straightened out."

The three men sat down in a half-circle about him, and Tony, after a drink of cold tea, began as briefly as possible his account of their adventures.

"Say," interrupted Vansittart when he had mentioned the finding of the old man and the dumb Swahili, "what was his name?"

"Never knew," returned Tony and related how the old man had died.

"Poor old Plexy!" exclaimed Boulters. "They got him, you see, Van."

"He was my partner for seven years," explained Vansittart. "Tried to get a message out but— I'll tell you later."

Tony had omitted to relate the story of the fight with Sawyer and his subsequent suspicions of Bodiker, but when he came to the incident of the dumb Swahili and the hypodermic syringe they returned forcibly. He stopped; and, turning to Sawyer lying near him, demanded sharply:

"What d'you know about that syringe, Sawyer? Was it poison or not?"

As the man raised his eyes Tony noticed that they were faintly veiled. The English doctor leaned forward and whispered:

"He's dying. They got him through the left lung and the spine. He knows it, poor ——."

"Oh, then——" muttered Tony; but Plessons cut in with a curt—

"Better get it off yer chest, Sawyer."

Sawyer's weary eyes, once so truculent, sought Tony's, and he sighed and winced.

"'S right, Mr. Westlake," he said in a weak voice. "I'll come clean. I tried ter do yer dirt and that——" Sawyer's vocabulary was still strong. "Sure there was poison in the syringe. Bodiker meant it fer the ol' guy 'cause he knew us both out in 'Frisco.

"Bodiker had it on me fer a job back in Chi, and we took some dough off that Plexington feller. I held him up and Bodiker frisked him. The same night the bulls raided a dive and pinched us both; but that there rat planted the goods on me. That old guy knew him all right, but he'd bought a alibi and got away wit' it, and I got five years. I broke out and came after him. ——! If I'd ha' killed him I'd ha' had two up against me and murder, too, so I took five thousand off him, and he brought me in on a game which he said was all velvet. That was you, Mr. Westlake.

"Knew yer brother, so he said. He was wise to yer fam'ly anyway. He'd got a pull wit' a feller called Jack Gunner; had some split game wit' him ter get ol' Silas Gunner's dough. Dunno 'zackly how Bodiker got his hold on Jack Gunner. Card game and a woman, I heard, which would ha' put him in bad wit' the old man. Anyway Alick took it on.

"Docs said the old guy hadn't a week ter run. They was right to a day. But then Jack Gunner fell down and got hisself ironed out by a automobile and died half an hour before the old gazoo; and his going ter grab the whole works if he'd 'a' lived! What d'yer know about that?"

"Alick was crying crazy. His cut-in on five million bucks gone blooey! Then he comes back wit' a wonder. Dunno where he got the dope—shyster lawyer, I guess—but he's wise that the old man has a whatjercallit to his will."

"A codicil?" suggested Boulters, very much interested.

"Sure, that's it. The darned co-dee-cil said that if youse two, yer brother and yerself, Mr. Westlake, was ter survive Jack Gunner you was ter get the whole works fifty fifty."

"Good God!" interrupted Tony." Then I'm a millionaire!"

"Sure y'are, now yer brother's dead. But yer wasn't ter get it until yer was twenty-five. Y'are worth a cool five million bucks, and that's what Alick was after."

"——!" said Tony. "Then Bodiker raced across to Paris, dug me out and put over the elephant-hunting trip and the mutual-will stuff! You see," he added in explanation to the strangers," I joined up with the Canadians under another name, so the lawyers would not have known my address, not even through the army, and down on that dump in Soissons I never saw the American papers. He never intended I should come back; and you, Sawyer, meant to get me that night of my birthday!"

"You got it, mister," acknowledged Sawyer callously. "But I didn't know then yer was a regular feller. 'Sides, I was soused. Anyway, what could I do? Alick had it over me good and proper. I was ter do the dirty work and get a lousy hundred thousand. He hadn't no guts, Alick. Allus scared ter death.

"If I git a dirty job ter do I likes ter get it over," stated Sawyer naively. "But him! He was scared stiff of that—of Plessons there. Don't yer remember how he kicked when yer wanted ter take Plessons on? Didn't want no witnesses. Then he reckons it 'ud be safer and got sore wit' me 'cause I butted in before the bell rang? But ye're a regular feller, Mr. Westlake; and yer give me all I was asking fer that night, yer did!"

He smiled feebly.

"Then, as I said, when he ain't got no need to bump that old guy Plexington off he reckons maybe you'd get sick and use that fer quinin. But he never had no luck, Alick hadn't."

Sawyer paused for breath and resumed with the tone of one not caring.

"I wanted ter bump yer off right then, Mr. Westlake, 'cause I was through wit' this wild nature stuff; give me the willies, that did. But Alick was scared stiff, wanted regular witnesses and all that kind of bull. Reckoned he could buy Plessons if he had time; but, ——! He wanted a operating table ter get a couple o' bits outer him!"

"When them squareheads come up Alick had a hunch we could tell 'em a tale and get 'em ter put yer away; or I was ter do the job and put the goods on them; see? And then he reckoned he'd have them on Plessons as witnesses. Nuts, he was.

"But me, I'd lamped more'n a lousy hundred thousand wit' them di'monds; but Alick, he wouldn't listen ter reason; wanted ter grab both and freeze me out. That's what made me so sore that I bumped him off. Didn't mean ter.

"Only hit him once," he added plaintively and gave a gargling sigh. "Allus been a boob one way and another. Now he's through, and I guess I am."

There was silence for the falling of an autumn leaf. Then Vansittart said in a conventional tone—

"And you were saying, Westlake?"

"Eh? Oh, yes." And, recalling the story, Tony continued.

"Thanks!" said Vansittart when he had finished.

"Oh, no," said Tony. "We couldn't very well do anything else to save our hides, and——"

"That's all right," put in Boulters. "But—er—I don't think you realize—yet—what you've done. Er—you tell him, Van."

"Well," began Vansittart, "we—Plexy and I—bumped into the first sign of this outfit in Chinde. We had been up on a mining proposition in Portuguese East which had fizzled out; nothing doing under the dagoes; too much graft and all that. One night while we were waiting for a boat we were guzzling warm beer in a dago dive when we met up with a fellow who called himself Flaxman, but was as boche as they make 'em. Spoke English—or American, for he'd been years in the States.

"He was pretty soused and talked a lot about having struck it rich up country, but was mighty mysterious about the direction. When he got tanked up a bit more he let out that he was trying to fix an American passport; said he'd lost his, and began cussing out our consul because he wouldn't believe his yarn.

"When we told him to lay off that stuff, he sobered up a bit, but insisted that he meant it; would give a thousand dollars for one; and when he appealed to the dago proprietor he backed him up. I advised him—wasn't my business anyway—to get down to the Transvaal and fix things there, but he said he couldn't make it. Looked in pretty bad shape, too. At last he shambled off, saying he was going to bed and would see us in the morning.

"Nobody else in the joint except a couple of drunken stokers from a British boat, and out of curiosity we started pumping the proprietor. He said the fellow was all right, and after a bit of stalling showed us a raw diamond he'd bought from the man for about a hundred dollars. Peach of a little stone worth a couple of thousand at least. Kind of made our mouths water. Funny," he broke off the narrative. "I'm pretty well fixed, yet I got all worked up over that. It isn't the cash; it's the fun going after it, I guess.

"Well, while we were pawing this stone about a couple of shots sent us out into the street to see what was on, and we found the same bird lying on the sidewalk not a hundred yards away—one through his lungs and another through the guts. We carried him back to the beer joint and sent for a doctor, but he was all in. He lasted about half an hour, raving about a second Kimberley, Lake Kivu, valley and volcanoes, spiders and —— knows what. Noticed when we opened up his shirt that his body was covered with half-healed sores; had a few on his face and neck too. Then he had a bit of a lucid interval just before he passed out, mumbled something about that we were white and he hoped the Americans would take it away from 'em and finally died, cursing the Kaiser and every boche under heaven.

"Hadn't got a thing on him—not even papers. We reckoned at the time that he'd been talking too much and some dago yeggs had laid for him. But it wasn't. Anyway we took up the invitation, and a month later we recognized the valley and the volcanoes. Hit 'em from the south and blundered down through the spiders."

"Through the spiders!" echoed Tony. "But didn't they get you?"

"Sure they did! Of course, making a run for it and half falling down the steep escarpment, we didn't get bitten up as bad as a fellow would climbing up. But they made a pretty mess of us."

"I came barging through them, too," put in Boulters.

"But how is it——"

"Wait. I'll give you that dope in a minute," resumed Vansittart. "Well, the first thing we knew—you see the darned camp was hidden by that spur back there—we bumped right into this outfit and came ambling up as meekly as lambs, and they just said, 'Put 'em up!' "

"Me too," concurred the British doctor. "The bally war being over, I never dreamed of finding a concentration camp of heinies!"

"Well, you see that renegade boche back there at Chinde had never put us wise to the fact that there was a whole column pretty nearly of his brothers here. Anyway they'd got us good, and squarehead fashion, weren't any too polite about it. Dumped us over there where we found Boulters. He'd only been here about a month then. You'd never guess what their game is—or was, I'm mighty glad to say, thanks to you fellows. A regular Tirpitz-cum-blood-and-iron-cum-Lenine stunt—and then some, believe me!

"WELL," resumed Vansittart, "it's the everlasting superman-blond-beast-Deutschland-über-alles stuff. They'll never get that out of their nuts. They have that antlike efficiency and persistence—just like these darned spiders. As soon as you smash their web they start right in spinning another; and their souls are like the spiders'—no call of humanity, no pity for others or themselves will move 'em."

"Yes, I guess that's right," assented Tony, thinking of the von Muhlhauser's cold indifference to his own fate or his men's.

"Sure I'm right," said Vansittart with a touch of heat in his voice. "Well, let me get back to the beginning as far as we've been able to dope it out from the *Herr Doktor*. He's a vain, talkative swine, and he'll yap for hours boasting of his accursed system; and he's the king pin of the works here.

"It seems he was caught out here when the war started, hunting specimens for his experiments, and joined up with their forces as ordinary surgeon. At the end they got chased out of Uganda and stumbled on this valley by accident. They had the luck of the ——, or Odin maybe; he is said to provide specially for his chosen; for at the time locusts hit the valley, and apparently the spiders were so gorged that they were sluggish. Anyway they marched down in a formation expressly designed by the *Herr Professor*—mark this!—himself—you bet!—with the *Kommandant* and officers in the center, about them the white soldiers, protected again by a double rank of blacks; for *Herr Professor* had a hunch that maybe the spiders were poisonous. Well, they got through with a few dozen blacks bitten up and a few whites; and by way of compensation—just to show the Lord was leading 'em all right!—they found the diamonds.

"They were tickled to death. From the military point of view the valley was a splendid hide-out and depôt for arms; the stones would provide a *Kolossal*—yep, *Herr Doktor's* own word!—fortune for the benefit of the monarchist cause; supply the sinews they couldn't pry loose anywhere else, I guess. And from a scientific point of view the place was ideal to carry out the professor's experiments, which, I gather, had been denied full expansion in the Fatherland by the sentimentalists—if there be any sich animile there!

"They're efficient all right. First thing *Herr Doktor* starts after an anti-toxin to counteract the spiders' poison and gets it. That by the way is how that Flaxman fellow got away. He was a medical orderly, stole a phial of the anti-toxin and hopped with a parcel of stones. They sent after him, for they have agents in Chinde from whom they get supplies; but they daren't make a big fuss, so they quietly bumped him off.

"The *Kommandant* digs in and wants labor. Sends off a couple of officers and men and steals some diving suits from that wreck on the Tana—although we've never seen 'em and they keep 'em hidden, I understand. Suits were more practical for raids and reconnoitering than anti-toxin, which is apt to incapacitate the patient for weeks. Then they sent out parties to round up bunches of natives for mine labor, drove 'em through, shot anti-toxin into 'em to pull 'em round and slit their tongues and pierced their ear drums so that in case of escape—! Very efficient, huh?

"We tried to get after that anti-toxin; but since Flaxman bolted brother doc keeps it hidden somewhere. Then we drew lots to make a break and get a letter out for help before going under. Poor old Plexy! Well, you know.

"We were going to give him a month—unless *Herr Professor* started something before—and then break or bust. We planned to either buy—the askaris didn't love their bosses, believe me!—or fix the sentry; then fire the camp and while they were busy, try to burn a path through the spiders.

"We had decided on tomorrow night, and you can imagine we felt good when you fellows started. The sentry simplified matters by bolting off to see what was on; and we, guessing you were some other unlucky —— who had blundered into the trap, had the hunch to stir up the deaf-and-dumb crowd. We had some —— of a job—and working against time, for we knew you couldn't last long—getting the idea into their nuts; but when they did get it and the askaris joined their brothers and finished the job they went strong. Now, doc, you take over the technical side of their pretty little game."

"Well," began the doctor, "the scheme is built on false biological premises. It appears, from what he himself says, that he had already begun researches in Germany before the war, but had had considerable difficulty in securing—er—suitable material.

"He had need to have a quantity of—er—subjects for observation, which led him, I believe, to come to Africa with the purpose of experimenting on some form of anthropoid which hadn't turned itself into trade unions and sentimental societies. Well, chance led him here, as Van told you, and he determined to make the most of a devil-sent opportunity.

"He began first on the apes and a few of the lesser gorilla, which had been trapped in this valley, and the blacks, using his field instruments.

"Then when the anthropoids were exhausted and he had replenished his laboratory through their agents at Chinde, he actually started on some of their own white men. Probably that fellow Flaxman as a medical orderly—and he was a good blond specimen—knew something and got the wind up. We felt sure our time was coming too, and that was one main reason we were willing to take any chance to get away.

"Mentioning blonds, we get a hint of his trouble—a fixed idea and technical insanity. The hypothesis is that the Nordic is the superior race, the superman of the genus homo; and of course the Germans are the—er—only and original. Roughly speaking we—the Anglo-Saxon races of England and America—are what he calls sub-Nordic and renegades and therefore the best material for his—er—scientific purposes.

"Now historically it is a fact that empires have a habit of becoming eventually bloated and weak, such as the Roman and so on, and consequently have fallen before a more vigorous barbarian horde. According to the Germanic theory war, and only war, can keep a nation fit; but this mighty seer sees beyond this; realizes, so he says, the inevitable future for which he is working to preserve the Germanic race. It is an axiom, of course, that in the next war—which they all say they are now preparing for; I nearly said spinning!—they will be victorious and sweep the world.

"Now probably you will be surprized, gentlemen, to hear that the good and ruthless *Doktor* maintains that there shall—mark that 'shall,' and confound it not with the weak 'will'; no pun intended!—of the pacifists—there shall be no more war in this shortly-coming-but-not-yet-here age."

The doctor smiled grimly.

"Yes, the Germanic race shall be—Lord, I feel like Moses with the tablets of the Law!—shall be lords of the universe, all apparently engaged in scientific research and creating mighty works of art, and presumably—at least one hopes for some human touch!—swilling beer and sausages while we—um—sub-Nordic and other inferior races sweat willingly for the greater glory of them and the All Highest—let's hope they'll give God a chance even if it's only 'Me *und Gott*'!—all by means of the *Herr Professor Doktor's* patent for suppressing the will-to-power."

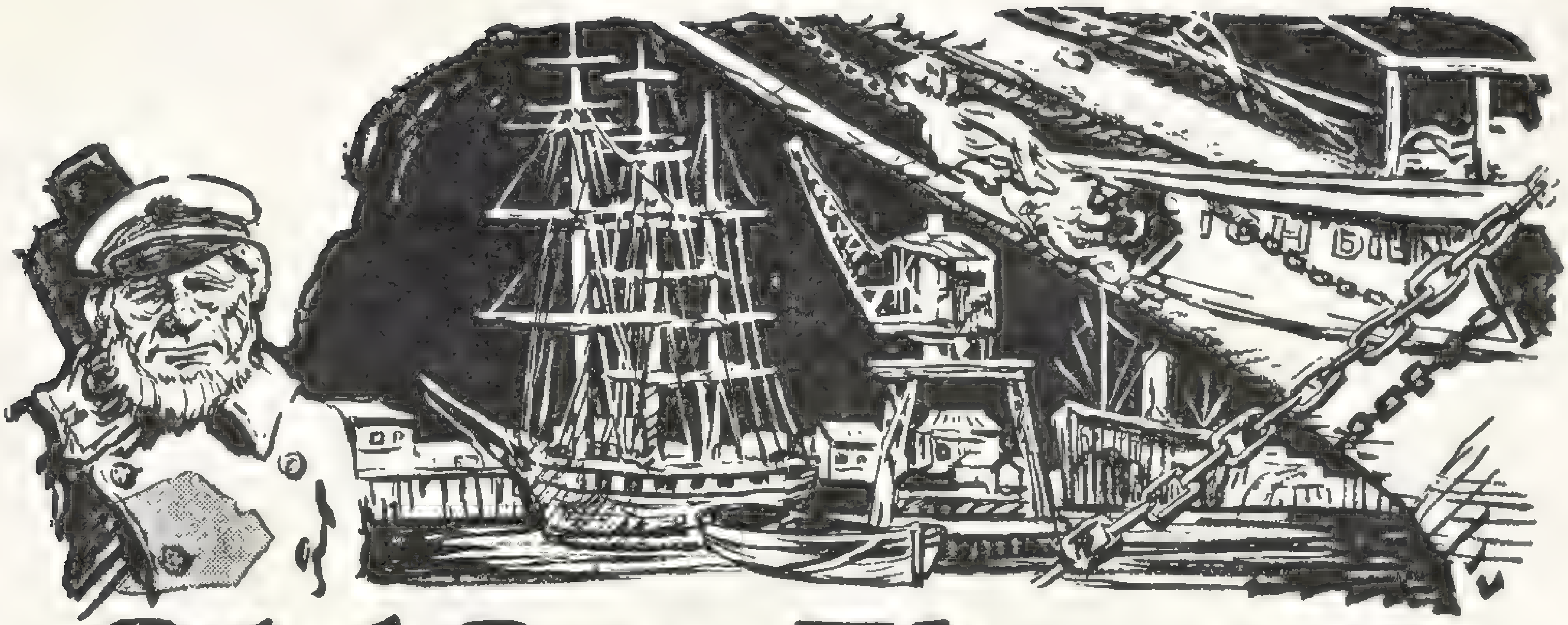
"Will-to-power? How?"

"By the simple process of a certain operation—to avoid technicalities—upon the left hemisphere of the brain. To this end—which obviously justifies the means!—he has been experimenting. His thesis is that he can by the transference and grafting of a certain portion of the lobe of a black man's brain upon that of, say, a sub-Nordic—Van, for example!—take the objectionable kick out of his system and replace it with a highly desirable slave instinct, and *vice versa*, transform the nigger into a good slave with the energy of a white man."

"You mean to say," exclaimed Tony, "that that homicidal maniac has been——"

"Yes. On the monkeys, the blacks, some of his own people as well as several strangers, Belgian Service people and a Portuguese explorer who had had the ill luck to blunder, as we did, into his web. He admits—remark the delicacy!—that he hasn't *quite* succeeded yet—as those who don't die go mad. Listen!"

A silence save for the hum of the distant forest was broken by that hoarse, crazy scream, rasping on the nerves of the four white men like a blunt knife on a raw nerve.



Old Sea Flower

by BILL ADAMS

Author of "Liverpool to Vancouver," "The Mean Second," etc.

HIS SHIP completing the loading of her nitrate cargo in the port of Iquique, Captain Elias, seated at the table in her saloon, stared at the scarlet poppies and the purple iris painted upon the bird's-eye maple panels before him. At his back, in the center of the after-bulkhead, hung a lifebuoy; kept there for twenty years past for his wife in case of need.

The ship's name was on the upper arc of the buoy, in bright crimson letters, unlike the black lettering of the buoys at the taffrail and break of the poop. By a similar fancy of the old man's, the ship's port of registry was omitted from the lower arc of the buoy, which was decorated instead by flower and by bud of painted poppy and iris; the painting upon the buoy, like that of the wood panels of the saloon, the handiwork of the old man's wife.

Elias was a man of stumpy build, of large and bony face; his white hair, long and thick, inclined to waviness; his chin hidden under a white beard that grew well down upon his chest. His whiskers came high upon his cheek bones, his wrinkled nose and brow-protected, crow-footed eyes thus framed in a close circle of hair which was white as the low drooping locks above his half-hidden forehead. There was an easy lightness in his step, a bear-like confidence in his feet. He ambled, somewhat as bears amble; in his shoulders the lurch of a peaceful old bear who seeks no trouble. His eyes, like a seaway under cloudy weather, seemed neither blue nor gray; slightly inquisitive old eyes that told of oft tried patience; of possibilities also for overwhelming wrath.

Seated alone in his saloon, looking backward over long years, the old captain recalled the far-away days of his first voyage, which at one moment seemed to have been a voyage begun but yesterday; at another to have been made by some other than he, so distant did it seem.

About to leave Iquique, upon his last sea passage, Elias was homeward bound, for the final time.

The ship, a battered Triton, was a travesty of what she once had been; her spars warped, her sides eaten thin by hunger of many seas, by rust of many voyages. No fresh paint, no gold leaf, might ever make her figurehead seem young again; her figurehead — a war-worn warrior whose scarred features still gazed courageously across the varying waters. In his remaining hand was gripped a dull edged sword. His shield was long since lost, when, by the grinding of ice cakes, his left arm had been torn to the waves. Three wooden ostrich feathers upon his helmet's crest were chipped and forlorn, and defiance had long ago been replaced by a quaint appearance of patience in his eyes.

When, over a year ago, Elias had taken his ship across the Mersey bar, the owner, shaking hands with him for the last time, had bidden him and his old wife farewell.

"Where's the boy?" Mrs. Elias had asked, and the owner, smiling, had shaken his head.

"You'll probably be in the trades before his ship gets in."

Mrs. Elias was short as her husband, and, like him, square of frame; an old sea-woman known wherever her husband was known. Her white hair, trimmed shorter than his, stood in wiry curls around an open face. Her eyes, like her husband's; her voice, though feminine, was not greatly dissimilar to his. Like her man, Mrs. Elias knew sun and star intimately and could guide a ship's way by them. The lore of the sea as much her own as his, they had all things in common; the life of each made complete by that of the other. They were a childless pair.

Recalling the first years of his long captaincy Elias brought to mind old sailing days of years ago, and, seeing the owner whom he had served so long, recalled a day, when, a little lad beside him, the owner had come down to bid the ship farewell. He remembered his, and his wife's, words at parting, and the owner's answer.

"You'd better let us take him," from Mrs. Elias, and a shake of the head from the owner with the answer—

"Perhaps, when he's older."

The child was motherless.

He remembered his own question, when he came from sea again, at another voyage's ending.

"Where's the boy?" and, from the owner, "He's at school."

"He'll soon be old enough to go to sea," from himself and his wife; then a smile upon the owner's face, neither assenting nor dissenting.

A perplexed look came to the old man's face; memory of disappointment making his eyes gray, dulling the blue in them.

Childless themselves, they had waited patiently for the day to come when the owner's son should have been old enough to go to sea. He should be their charge, theirs the pride of his teaching in the old sea ways.

Memory of a later voyage's ending came to him, bringing the owner's reply to their old query—

"Where's the boy?"

The boy was gone to sea—with a ship of a different line, while Elias and his wife were yet homebound.

Times had changed at sea since the days of their first command, and together they had watched the slow change as it came. Of recent years such ships as came from the builders came fitted with donkey engines wherewith to hoist their topsails and to heave their anchors in.

Lanyard rigging long ago replaced by screw, seamanship had been abandoned for a blacksmith's trade, and where in old days block and tackle had been the insignia of a sailor's calling nothing but a crow bar now was needed. Seamen continually replaced by navigators, seamanship was fast becoming a lost art, a craft whose fine day was going to the discard. A cloud beneath which the day of old men was fading away had overspread both port and ocean.

Elias and his wife had asked no explanation, and, no explanation offered them, had hidden their hurt.

Bidding the owner a last good-by ere he had sailed on this, his last voyage, Elias, his eyes toward the river bar, had said—

"When we're settled in Alameda and his ship comes to Frisco, send him to see us."

They had come, in due course, to San Francisco. A bungalow, purchased upon a previous voyage, awaited them across the bay beside the quiet Alameda water front, flowers on its low pergola, roses on its lattice fence. In Alameda, home at length, finding peace in retirement, they would treasure peace together; the ship and sea for ever passed from out of their lives.

When they had been four weeks in San Francisco the bungalow was ready for them, and, all their possessions transferred to it, nothing but necessities of life were left aboard. Door mats made of rope by sailors on many idle tropic days were sent ashore. Canvas mops hung in a row upon the kitchen wall. The ship denuded of what ever had been theirs, iris and poppy had taken on a lifeless, a chill, deserted look.

"We'll take the buoy, when we go," Elias had said, and her eyes upon the ship's name on its upper arc, his wife had smilingly assented.

Upon the very day on which they were to have left the ship a mysterious malady descending on the old lady had left her powerless. Without suffering she had lain still, her interest seemingly gone.

Fetched by the mate a doctor had come aboard, and had shaken his head.

With scant faith in the long-shore doctors, great faith in the healing power of the sea where, amid those who live by her, sickness is but rare, the old man had cabled his owner in Liverpool and again prepared to take the ship away. Confident that the voyage would heal his enfeebled wife he intended a quick run to and back from Sydney, and, long accustomed to all emergency, remained unperturbed.

Delayed by long chafing through a succession of head winds on the equator, the passage to Sydney had been slow; but since a measure of health returned soon after sailing day both were content to bide their time, and wait the voyage's ending.

IN SYDNEY a stranger brought a letter aboard direct from the owner.

> When this reaches you I shall have gone on. If you can discharge your mate take the bearer in his place. For as long as you may, keep an eye on him for me.

Scarce staying to greet the bearer of the letter Elias had hurried below, leaving him alone in the chart room whence he stared over the harbor. The stranger was a strong framed man in the mid-twenties, wide of shoulder and of medium height; a loose-lipped, vacant-eyed fellow whose gaze had been dull while the old captain had pored over his father's letter.

There was a ring upon one of his fingers. No man can handle canvas aloft with rings on his fingers and Elias, whose own short-fingered hands were bare and brown, despised all such baubles. But catching sight of the ring he had seen nothing wrong about it—this was the owner's son; the ring a funny fancy.

The newcomer had turned lusterless eyes upon the old man as he hurried below to his wife, and, his loose lips fallen a little apart, his eyelids drooping, had smiled; as though derisively at age.

Opening the door of their cabin, Elias, almost childishly excited, had called his wife,

"He's come—he's here," he said.

Mrs. Elias lay prone upon the bed. Erect at the bedside, aquiver with his tidings, her man read the letter to her: all unconscious that she was but semi-conscious; then bent over her,

"See? he's come!"

She had looked up at him then, and had stared as if perplexed at the bare bulkheads about her, at the bare planks below. A light of faint understanding in her face she whispered, her low spoken words but half distinguishable. Elias stooped above her,

"Eh? what is it? Not sick again?" he cried.

"Tired," she whispered.

"You'll see him soon. He'll be our mate. I wish we'd had him sooner," he said.

Though always supposing that he did so, Elias knew naught of illness. He'd doctored many an ailing sailor in his day, and, nonchalantly dosing ailing fo'c'sle hands with medicines taken from the medicine chest in the after store room had mixed for many a malingerer a dose of salts. Once in a while he'd concocted a bottle of paregoric, and usually the man had recovered sufficiently to return to duty, which was all that mattered.

Contemptuous of sickness, he had been familiar with death by the sea's way. Men had gone overboard at night, some to be brought back aboard again, some to be lost. Such things were a part of existence, and to be taken as they came. Immune from harm himself he had ever supposed his wife to have been equally immune. There was in him the simplicity of folks to whom death is real for all save for themselves.

"You'll soon be right," he said and, leaving her, turned at the doorway to add, "I'll go talk to the mate and get him to take a discharge. We'll have this big fellow with us for a while at least."

"I'll charter her for Chili," he said to himself, seeking the mate. "That'll give us longer to have him with us. Aye, we'll keep an eye on him."

Soon he was back with the old woman, his eyes shining like two blue crests of waves beneath the sun.

"The old mate's going ashore. He didn't mind. I've signed the new one on and he's gone off to fetch his dunnage now."

He prowled to and fro, along his poop, and up and down about his quarterdeck, and in and out the cabin, where he said:

"You'll soon be fine. We'll take him to see the house when we get in to Frisco."

The two of them alone together he chattered to her in their cabin:

"I'm chartering her for Chili, to Iquique. We'll keep him with us for a while—we'll take the long way home. She'll be his when we leave her. He'll take good care of her. He's a big fellow."

He went out to the quarterdeck, where the second mate coming to him, spoke of a fine berth proffered him aboard a big ship Greenock-bound, and asked release. The new mate returned aboard at that minute and Elias turned to him—

"Mister, where can I get a second if I let him go?"

The mate bore a canvas bag flung carelessly across his shoulder,

"That's easy. I'll get you one," he said.

At that the old man started, half unconsciously—an omitted "sir." There are old rules at sea, and age-old customs. Yet this was the owner's son, a friend.

Elias went to his wife again.

"He's getting a second, a friend of his; a smart young chap he says. We'll have good luck on the road home."

At sight of her wan features he, despite himself, sensed a sudden chill.

"Sooner go to Frisco direct? She's not chartered yet," he said, and seeing her smile shook all distrust away. He went to prowl forth and back upon his poop again—an old bear fervid with the spring's awaking.

The mate brought the new second to the ship, a mere boy; a sea apprentice but now released from his apprenticeship, a lad come out of the same great modern ship by which the mate had come from Liverpool.

"All right," Elias said.

Later he rejoined his wife.

"We'll start to load tomorrow, and be away in forty-eight hours."

She seemed to sleep, and he returned to the deck's bustle.

"Mister, I'll leave the getting of a crew to you. My wife's not very well. You look after the ship," he said to his new mate.

"All right," the mate replied, and Elias sensed a chill again, an undefined distrust in something somewhere.

True to all sea tradition there could be no converse between mate and master save such as pertained to ship's affairs. In such matters, directing as little as might be, it had ever been his custom to give his mates free rein.

"You'll find her a good ship, mister," he said.

The mate made no reply, and visioning suddenly the long road home by way of Chili, the short run to 'Frisco direct, he stared aloft to his tophamper; then, seeming to shake himself, passed below, content.

He smiled at sight of the lifebuoy on the bulkhead as he passed it by. It was a part of the home that was so soon to be. It would be taken ashore, whither all that was his, and his wife's, was already gone.

Winds had blown out of the west along the road to Chili, so that the old ship had flown; with small call for any sailoring on the part of her fo'csle hands. Elias had been content to ignore that riffraff company—a sorry lot the mate had gathered.

Mrs. Elias tottered about cabin and saloon, and sat of evenings on the poop.

"He'll take care of her when we leave her. She'll be his," they said, and seated on the skylight watched the broad back of the mate, who stood immobile beside the forward binnacle.

Thus they had come to Chili.

WHILE Elias stared at the flowered panels before him the alleyway door was opened and the mate looked in.

"The tugboat's alongside," he said.

From the quarterdeck Elias caught the faint *tap-tapping* of the carpenter's mallet; the carpenter battening down the after hatches ready for sea. At thought of his crew he frowned a little—the first crew the choosing of which had been left to any save himself. Larrikins from Sydney, come to the sea to escape the jails; beachcombers signed on while staggered with cheap spirits; debauched deck hands from shapeless tramp steamers. Four deserters had been replaced with Iquique Chilanos.

A short blast came from the tugboat, whose acrid smoke hung about the quarterdeck and drifted thinly through the alleyway door into the cabin. Elias rose and went up to his poop.

In a little while the ship was away, the steamer masts in the roadstead astern become a dim forest of attenuated trees, the coast grown indistinct in fading daylight. Elias went below again, and passing through the saloon approached his cabin.

"We'll soon be home: It looks like wind," he said, opening the cabin door.

As he closed the door behind him he stared in amazement. Her face to the deck above, his wife lay outstretched upon the deck, sightless eyes gazing glassily. Calling no help, he bent over her and raising her in his yet powerful arms laid her upon the bed.

From the deck he heard the outcry of the crew, who braced the crossjack yards in. Presently the voices died away; the hands gone forward with the second mate to trim the yards upon the fore and main. From overhead came the slow thud of the chief mate's boots; the mate walking the poop.

Along the now shadowy deck the sailmaker walked aft, his eyes upturned to watch the set of the mizzen topmast staysail. He was tall and gray mustached; a long-legged, spindly dressmaker for ships, to whom the word "home" held no significance; a voyage's length of no import whatever to him.

He'd been Elias' sailmaker for many voyages. The antique ship was long since become his home. Knowing her desire, he knew all that Elias willed for her—full power of wind in her canvas, for holding and for driving. Since their first voyage together, as sailmaker and captain, there had never been any discussion of the sailmaker's craft. He was Elias' right-hand man — part of the ship.

Come to the break of the poop the sailmaker met the mate, face to face in the gloom, and asked a brief question, inquiring of Mrs. Elias.

Making no verbal reply, the mate shrugged his shoulders.

His eyes on the set of the staysail, the sailmaker turned away. Loose in the belly, the staysail hung at slack halyards, its canvas a little wrinkled—the sailmaker's affair in a way; yet, since the sail was set, the mate's affair yet more. A hint of scorn in his eyes he descended through the chart room to the saloon. He crossed the saloon and stood for a moment, bent and listening, at the skipper's door; then returned to the deck.

When he entered his room at the after end of the midship house the carpenter looked up. They shared the room, bunk above bunk; the carpenter lean as his partner and, like him, heavily mustached and beardless—a bald, crow-footed seaman come from the days of sail to a perplexed, somewhat listless old age. Swede and Fin, they had set out in life together; had grown up together, bickering as Fin and Swede bicker; but inseparable.

Having joined Elias together they had remained with him ever since; each caring for her unbidden by the master. The carpenter, familiar with every seam between her planks, knew when each seam was last calked; when, under ordinary circumstances, each seam would next need calking. Much of her woodwork was his fashioning; her gangway and blocks without number, and several of her upper yards.

That the lower yards were warped was no fault of his: That was age and the sea; just as were the bow in his shoulders and the stoop at his waist. The gig, built of Java teak, and the envy of all shipmasters desirous of beauty, was his handiwork.

The carpenter looked a question at the sailmaker, who, replying with a shake of the head, remained silent.

Mrs. Elias lay with wide eyes fixed upon the telltale compass fastened face downward to the deck above her pillow, which was Elias' pillow also; as if she watched the course for Alameda. Elias, seated on the chair at her bedside was an indistinct shape in the unlighted cabin. He sat till the cabin was quite dark; then rose and lighted the lamp. The flame turned low, he returned to his seat and bent for a moment above his wife; then, straightening suddenly, stepped back across the cabin and turned the lamp high.

Its tones softened by the intervening deck, the brass bell upon the poop above clanged softly. Of a sudden the ship was become strange.

Elias whispered to his wife, and bending above her called her by name, once, twice, and again; then, a strikingly forlorn figure, stood erect. For a time he appeared to be an image carved from stone; then, stepping to the cabin door passed quickly through and entered the saloon.

The mate sat at the saloon table, and, eating heartily, wiped his loose lips with a large smooth hand. His eyes, ignoring the steward, followed the dishes that the steward set before him; the steward a stunted and disheveled negro in whose ears were large rings.

The one intent upon his eating, the other upon his work, neither mate nor steward looked up when the old man entered. Passing behind the mate he went to the door of the alleyway leading out to the quarterdeck, and, turning backward when he reached it seemed about to speak; but hurried away instead, to the open deck; ambling with a curious uncertainty in his step.

The sailmaker and carpenter, rising as the skipper appeared at their door, looked at him in silence. He turned at once away, back to the night-gloomed deck, and was immediately followed by both of them.

When the three old men came aft together one behind another, the mate and the second mate were talking on the poop. Elias, passing through the saloon, spoke to the steward—

"Tell the second mate to get his supper."

He entered the cabin and sat at his wife's side; the carpenter standing at the bed's foot while the sailmaker went forward again, to return in a little while with a roll of sail cloth tucked under his arm. They worked together, without any words. By and by the sailmaker and carpenter went away and left Elias alone with his wife; a needle in his right hand, a palm upon his left, and twine over his shoulders. Long ago Elias, too, had been a sailmaker. Now he used his gentle craft again.

The sailmaker and carpenter seated themselves, side by side, on the after hatch, under the stars, ready should they be needed; the sailmaker staring up to the loom of white canvas above them; the carpenter's eyes upon the planks at their feet. The decks hidden by the night, the sea talked in whispers around the silent ship.

Bye and bye the poop bell clanged again, and was answered at once by the bell at the fo'csle break. The after and the forward bell spoke to one another, though aloud, discreetly.

A sailor walked aft to relieve the wheel.

Upon the poop the two mates were talking in low voices, and, his shadow dim against the lower stars, the relief for the wheel passed close to them.

"I'll bet he puts her in the nitrate," said the mate to the second.

A moment later the wheel relief, taking the wheel over, spoke to the helmsman,

"Der olt vooman iss dead. Dey buries her in de nitrate."

THE helmsman went forward and entered the fo'csle, where his shipmates idled in their bunks and on their sea chests. Victims of the booze and of the boarding master's crimps, they looked up at him from faces that told of nights in sailortown; of sleepless nights of liquor and of women. Women's pictures were hung upon the bulkheads above the frowzy bedding in some of their bunks. Here and there a bottle was hidden away, beneath a mattress or in a canvas seabag. They returned to their talk, jibbering in many lingoes—Chilano muttering to Chilano, white man to white.

" 'T'old woman's kicked it," said the helmsman in the doorway, and they all looked up again for a moment; then returned to their talk.

" 'Ee's goin' to stick 'er in the nitrate,' said the helmsman, in the doorway still, and again they all looked up at him.

"Wot for in the nitrate?" asked a young, pimply-faced man.

"Preserves 'em," grunted a man, who, half naked, sat rubbing dubbin into a pair of big leather sea boots.

They stared at the helmsman and at one another, only the four Chilanos continuing their talk.

"Corpuses is bad luck," said one.

"You knows it, they is," said the pimply-faced man, and a sort of quiver ran from one to another of them, so that the four Chilanos looked up to listen.

" 'E figures to bury 'er ashore w'en we gets to 'Frisco," said the half naked man drawing a sea boot upon a sockless foot.

"Vee nedder coom to shore, poys—dot sure," cried a big sailor, who rose upon unsteady feet. "Dot ain'd right," he added

"Vot we goin' to do?" he asked, glowering round at them, seated all about him.

"De mate iss fat like a girl," said one, and they all laughed; the four Chilanos joining in the laughter.

The helmsman stood staring at a woman's picture in one of the upper bunks.

"Vell, vot we goin' to do 'bout it?" asked the big man, and sat down heavily.

"Here's the mate," said the helmsman, as from the deck behind him the mate's voice called,

"Clue up the for' t'gall'sl."

The weather was become squally from the south, the ship slipping along with a high slap of water all about her.

They piled out and made for the topgallant gear; the pimply-faced man loitering to reach a bottle from under another's pillow and steal a long swallow. He followed them to the deck upon unsteady feet.

"Four of you aloft and make it fast," said the mate, when the sail was clued up, and the pimply-faced man climbed to invisible rattlines to follow three others aloft to the spar, where the sail flapped in the darkness high above them.

A squall blew out of the south and, whipping through the rigging, lifted the ship forward with a shuddering leap. There was a heavy thud upon the deck below the shrouds. While the men who were not gone aloft reentered the fo'csle the mate stumbled over, then bent to look at a shape upon the deck.

From aloft a voice called—

"There's only three of us up."

Called by the mate, the men were gathering round, and bending above the fallen man.

"Get aloft one of you. Help them to roll up that sail," said the mate, and another hand climbed to the rigging.

Two men were furling the weather side of the sail, one man alone on the lee yardarm. The fourth man joined him there.

"Skinny's killed hisself," he shouted in his partner's ear.

"Vott's dot?" called the big sailor, who, working to windward, just caught the speaker's words. "Vott you says?" he shouted.

The fourth man repeated his words, loud above the wind's cry, more than a hundred feet up in the night.

The sail made fast, the four of them stood in the bunt, and, their individual shapes blurry in the darkness, talked in loud tones; their voices inaudible on the deck far below.

On deck the second mate had fetched the sailmaker, who came forward with the carpenter at his heels. The sailors knelt about the body of the pimply-faced man.

"Wot about the old woman, Sails?" asked one of them as the sailmaker came up.

The sailmaker looked at him through the darkness, without reply; then knelt at the dead man's side.

" 'E ain't goin' to put 'er in the nitrate, is he?" asked a sailor, and the carpenter glowered unseen.

The big man and his three companions jumped from the shrouds to the deck.

Under the fo'csle head the sailmaker plied his needle, the carpenter seated on a door sill behind him. The watch on deck was joined by the men from aloft and all talked, all at once; the watch below, who were turning into their bunks, listening to them, their faces above the bunk edges.

One by one the watch below slumbered, while the others talked till midnight came. At midnight the watches changed places and the sleepers, awakened for their four hour shift, talked of death and of liquor and women till their turn came round to sleep once more at four of a windy morning. They muttered and cursed, and laughed alternately, all of them saying the same thing in the end—

"We waits and sees."

Throughout the night Elias, seated at the bedside beside the canvassed form of his wife, nodded in his cabin.

At eight bells of the morning the mate blew his whistle, calling the crew out to check the weather main braces that the ship might be brought to a stop. When she lay, idle on the tumbling sea, the men walked forward, moodily, and, talking in low voices, questioned one another. The big man was at the wheel. Soon they came from beneath the fo'csle head, bearing between them the pimply-faced man.

At the moment that they rested his feet upon the quarter railing the sailmaker and carpenter, Elias at their heels, stepped from the cabin alleyway door, bearing between them another canvas covered form. They laid it upon the quarterdeck; then commenced to unbatten and to take off the after hatches. The sailors stared at them, their eyes very wide.

The mate spoke to the bearers of the pimply-faced man.

"Lay him on the deck. Two of you help get those hatches off."

They stared at the mate, as if not understanding him, and none of them moved.

The sailmaker and carpenter, having opened the hatch, went below, to the top of the cargo—nitrate sacks piled pyramidwise in the ship's hold, and already well settled. They cut sacks open and smoothing the loosened nitrate, made a trough in it.

A man in newly dubbined sea boots stepped up to the mate and whispered to him, his voice inaudible to his mess-mates, and to Elias, who with his back to the other side of the hatch looked over the sea.

The mate, a scornful stare in his face, shrugged his shoulders; then stepped toward Elias.

"They want that fellow buried in the sea," he said.

Elias turned slowly about, his open gaze upon the sailors, his head thrust a little forward, so that they involuntarily drew toward one another, their backs to the railing. Voiceless assent in his gaze he looked at the mate, who returned at once to the sailors.

They lifted the pimply-faced man and laid his feet on the rail again; then stood waiting, their faces abashed as they watched Elias, who staring back at them as if he did not see them, gazed beyond them.

A sudden sea, a sharp browed swift running swell that broke to smother round her counter, lifted the ship, and Elias, steadying himself with a hand on the hatch coaming, looked down to the sailmaker and carpenter on the nitrate below. The mate laid a hand on the poop ladder, while the sailors, thrown one against another, grasped brace pins and one another's arms. The swell ran forward, a lather round the ship's sides, and, as she steadied, the bearers of the pimply-faced man recovered themselves. They stood blank-faced and dumb while their dark browed mess-mates murmured.

The pimply-faced man had slipped from their grasp and was gone to the sea.

"Go forward," said the mate, a suspicion of satire on his loose lip.

While they stood irresolute the head and shoulders of the sailmaker appeared above the hatch coaming, and, with the carpenter, he looked out upon them; the carpenter's eyes on a level with the hatch.

The mate and Elias were raising the form from the quarterdeck and laying it upon the hatch coaming. As the sailmaker and carpenter took it from them a sailor, pushed forward by his fellows, his eyes on Elias, walked slowly to the mate and whispered to him.

The sailmaker and carpenter were laying the canvas covered form down in the nitrate trough.

Others of the crew joined the spokesman, whom the mate was ordering forward with impatient gestures. Elias, become suddenly aware of their proximity, peered at them from colorless eyes, his face thrust a little forward—after the manner of a bear that sniffs.

Rising from the hatch the sailmaker and carpenter stood to his either side.

"Go forward, all of you," said the mate, a ring of uncertainty in his voice; as if he were afraid of their insistence.

The big sailor, leaving the wheel to itself, ran to the quarterdeck and descending the ladder opposite the gathered company joined them from behind and thrust them aside.

"You goes to keel us all—vee not stand for dot," he said.

The ship, her main yards laid aback, lay easy on the sea; her helm useless until her yards be trimmed.

The second mate watched from the poop.

"Vee goin' to put her in de sea," cried the big man, and pushed through his fellows till his face was close to the face of the mate.

The mate, his lips a little parted, stepped backward behind the three old men and left the big sailor face to face with Elias.

The wind was falling and a momentary sun shone brightly upon them all.

The mate, biting his lip, went to the poop to look down on them from beside the second.

The sailors watched their spokesman, and Elias with the two old men at his side.

THE sailmaker and carpenter stretched out their arms, in front of Elias, and stepping a little forward took the big sailor by his open shirt and flung him backward, so that he staggered among his shipmates.

"Get forward all of you," called the mate from the poop above, while the second whispered to him—

"He'd ought to bury her over the side."

As the stumbling man regained his feet Elias turned away and went to the alleyway door.

The sailmaker and carpenter, their faces blank as windless topsails, stepped toward the crew, who fell back.

"Vee ain'd goin' to stand fer it," said the big man, retreating before them, his face to their faces; but the others went forward, so that, left alone, he turned and followed them. Looking back over his shoulder he cursed the two old men on the quarterdeck, who, ignoring him, replaced the hatches and battened them down.

Side by side the two mates went forward together, and called to the men to square the mainyards; but the men glowered at them, speechless, from the fo'csle door. In their midst stood the big man, who said, over and over—

"Vee ain'd goin' to stand fer it."

Day drew on, with a falling wind. By

noon the sea was calm, the sails limp upon the spars.

The mates walked the poop, side by side, and talked in low voices.

"He'd ought to bury her overside," said the second.

"It's his business," said the mate.

The sailmaker, seated on the after hatch, stitched an old sail. The carpenter tapped with his calking mallet at the quarterdeck seams.

Elias sat by the empty bed, his face as white almost as his hair, his hands trembling a little now and then. He had brought the lifebuoy from the saloon bulkhead to his cabin and it lay on the bed, where he gazed at it.

Gaudy fish of the tropic waters disported below the broken armed figurehead, who searched with patient eyes along a motionless expanse of evening sea; as if desirous for a restful haven that never came.

The mates ate supper together; Elias remaining in his cabin. He nodded as night approached.

Night fell. Stars looked down upon the old ship, at whose side was no ripple.

Looking from fo'csle doors and ports, the men talked in whispers and, by and by, led by the big man, came to the invisible deck.

No bell clanged fore or aft. No lights were lighted.

The sailmaker and carpenter lay down, to doze alternately upon the after hatch, to sleep with their eyes open.

From the poop the mates stared landward through the night.

There was a blur of hastening silent figures upon the forward deck house. Fearful lest they waken ghosts of the dead or the eyes of the living the crew worked in soundless unison, until, lowered by tense hands, the long boat slipped, without splash or ripple into the sea abaft the fore rigging.

A waft stole out of the south, so that the ship's sails, lifted lightly, fell again with a faint slatting on spar and shroud. The sea, stirred by airs that wakened to immediately die again, became momentarily phosphorescent. Gazing toward the beam, where a trail of phosphorus moved slowly toward the far off shore, the mate spoke to the second mate.

"Whales about," he said.

Later they slept, turn and turn about, seated on the cabin skylight.

In the opalescent dawn the mate went forward, the luminous sea ashine from horizon to horizon. When he returned aft he and the second talked, their heads close together and their ears alert. His eyes bulgy with wonder the little negro waited upon them, the rings in his black ears catching the sun rays from the skylight above.

Breakfast done, the mates returned to the poop, while the negro went to the galley amidships, where the cook, a Chinaman as diminutive as the steward, mumbled pidgin curses at sailors who did not come to fetch their breakfasts.

The black and the yellow man went to the fo'csle together, and looked within it. They jibbered to one another. Above their heads ropes drooped. Behind them blocks hung, idle above the sea. They saw the empty boat chocks, and returned to galley and pantry too alarmed for speech.

Toward noon, airs rising from the south slatted the canvas. The blue sea was rippled. Far spaced white caps appeared and faded immediately into the blue again.

The sailmaker and carpenter went to the Old Man's cabin, to sit silent upon the settee; their eyes, like the Old Man's eyes, on the lifebuoy that lay upon the empty bed. No breath audible from their unmoving breasts, they sat on; their heads bent above the crimson lettering of the ship's name.

The mates ate together again then went forward; the first, with a crook of his finger, bidding the steward to follow. The second beckoned the cook from his galley.

Obedient to the mates, at whom they stared from fascinated eyes, the cook and steward went to the top of the forward deck house.

Southerly airs were increasing; the fore sails bellying out; while the mainsails, laid aback, held the ship powerless to move.

Presently, at the mate's bidding, the cook pattered barefooted to the galley, while the negro, obeying motioned orders, stood with a rope in his hands at the bow of the teakwood gig. A little while after the cook had returned, his arms laden with biscuit and with beef, the gig was in the sea. The mates sheeted her small triangle of sail, to catch the south airs. Passing below the figurehead the mate stared up at it; but the figurehead seemed to ignore him.

Afternoon drawing to evening brought more wind to sway hanging ropes and belly drooping canvas. With the coming of night the sea murmured.

The lifebuoy in his hand, Elias came from his cabin, and, the sailmaker and carpenter at his heels, passed up to the poop. The buoy beside him, they left him seated on the skylight, and lashed the helm; then went down to the decks. Blocks and tackles groaned in the darkness. The main yards creaking round, the ship stole away, everything full, and the wind a point before the beam. Her helm lashed, the breeze as she desired it, she steered herself, unaided by the hand of man.

Wind came songfully, the sea replying with its many voices; well known stars observant of three old men who, their faces intermittently lit by passing phosphorus, their shadowy forms serene, sat upon the skylight.

A LONG boat came to Iquique, filled with sailors, who, jabbering of disaster, all told the same tale—the tale of an old ship trapped by a squall with her kites on. There had been but bare time to get the long boat adrift. They were the talk of the port—for a day.

Along fiery sea tops a gig ran through the night hours, the second mate at her yoke ropes, the mate beside him in the stern sheets.

At midnight, thick lips to the second's ear, the mate leaned over; his eyes toward two small forms asleep in the boat's bottom.

The second mate nodded his head in assent.

"Aye—they'd jibber," he said.

At dawn a steamer, south bound for Magellan, picked up the gig, half full of sea water; the mate and second mate alone, cold-faced.

"You from that ship that got capsized?" they were asked.

"Yes," came instant reply, then eyes meeting in swift understanding.

Weeks passed. Months sped by.

A large Cape Horn bound bark, a double topgallant-yarder with a donkey engine to hoist her topsails and to heave her anchor in, lay with her yards aback, hove to off an island to barter for fruit with the natives.

The head man of the islanders came to her cabin door, and there, bearing in his arms a piece of mossy upwashed flotsam from the sea, met her skipper.

The skipper, taking the flotsam upwashed by the sea upon the island beaches laid it on his saloon table.

Seeking for letters, for the name of a ship, he found faded, time-worn lettering that, lit by the sun from the skylight above, glowed with a colour of old blood.

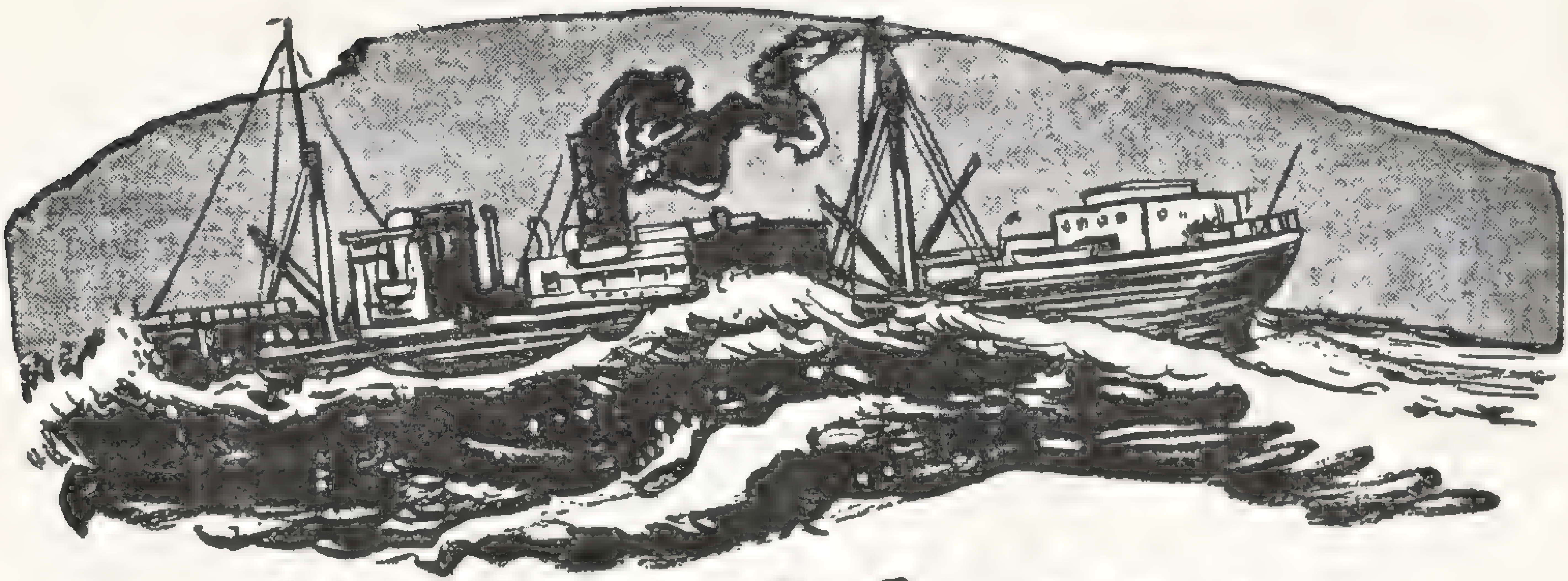
"There's no port of registry," he murmured; then, calling to his mate said,

"Look here, she's lost! A missing ship, eh?"

They nodded their heads at one another.

"Gone—gone long ago," they said.

The sun shone upon the faded, edge frayed letters of the lifebuoy, and on the flower buds, mossy, about and below a lost ship's name—"*Ich Dien.*"



Stowed Away

by RALPH R. PERRY

"LONG ANDY" PRESCOTT unconsciously quickened his pace as he stepped off the narrow iron drawbridge that spans the locks at St. Nazaire. He was cold; for the thin, chill, persistent, passionless rain of the French coast in autumn was rolling in from the Bay of Biscay, and two weeks in a hospital recovering from an attack of ptomain poisoning had left him with little strength to resist inclement weather.

During his illness his ship had sailed without him; hospital bills had left him broke—but these troubles were no longer serious. They would cease to exist when he had crossed forty feet of dirty stone quay and boarded the patched little tramp steamer *Sedalia.* Any American skipper would be glad to give a brother sailor down on his luck a passage home, but on the *Sedalia* Andy expected to find friends.

He had made his first trip to sea in her, ten years before. Her owner was a Kennebunkport man. At the head of that gangway he would see old Captain Vesock's bristling white mustache again, get a hearty thump on the back, a cup of coffee, and then swop yarns of old times all the way across the Western Ocean. He mounted in six swinging strides and jumped down on to the deck.

" 'N' where might you be goin', Bud?" came a menacing growl.

The front legs of a chair, which had been tilted back against the superstructure, hit the deck with a bang as a short, burly officer sprang to his feet and strode so close to Andy that their chests all but touched. Andy had a glimpse of thick arms, bent and swinging clear of the man's side as he walked, and a heavy chin covered with wiry, straw-colored bristles.

"Andy Prescott's my name. Was second officer the *Clyesdale,* and got left on the beach, sick. I'm looking for Captain Vesock, if he's aboard."

"Well, he ain't."

The answer was surly, as if the man were thoroughly glad of the fact, and as he spoke he stepped forward, so that to keep his distance Andy was forced to move back and to mount the step leading to the gangway.

"Say, I ain't nobody's nigger," he retorted. "I'm looking for the Old Man because I'm on the beach and want to sign on for the passage back. You're going to the States, aren't you? The old wagon always did when I sailed in her."

Andy was trying to force a smile, for after all he was asking a favor, though it was one that will invariably be granted to a sailor on the beach in a foreign port. But as he looked at the other man, the smile died and Andy's fists clenched. Dull turquoise blue eyes were just visible through a slit left beneath heavy, puffy lids. There was a cast in the right eye so that it slanted upward, like a Jap's.

"When will Captain Vesock be back?" Andy added frostily.

The other gave a short laugh, curt and mirthless as the bark of a dog.

"He won't be back. I'm the skipper. See?" Once more he moved forward, crowding Andy on to the gangway. "Captain Stivers—Al Stivers of New York, and

I don't need more hands, for Kennebunkport or any other bunk port."

"But look here!" Andy remonstrated.

The attitude of the other was so preposterous, so utterly at variance with an unwritten tradition of the sea, that he was sure he had not made himself clear.

"I told you I'd been sick. That my ship had sailed. And I'm broke. You're the only American ship in port, and unless you take me out I'll be liable to kick my heels here for a month. My Lord, Captain, be reasonable! I ain't askin' you for wages or a mate's job! All I want is a passage home. The owners know me. Why, I went to school with old man Luce's son and daughter. There'll be no kick out of them!"

Captain Stivers spat a fat quid of tobacco over the side.

"Nope," he growled.

"You mean——"

"I mean I won't take any dead-beats aboard. You get off my ship, and shake a leg! No more jawing. Git!" he roared, suddenly giving Andy a shove that sent him halfway down the gangway.

Andy caught the rope rail, and took one step back to administer a lesson in sea manners, but Captain Stivers was waiting with a cold grin in anticipation of a fight in which he would have all the right on his side. Andy checked himself.

Sick as he was, he thought he could lay out the skipper. But if he did, it only meant a term in a French jail. The muscles in his lean face writhed in his effort at self control, and Stivers' insulting leer made it hard to turn on his heel and walk away. But Andy went, coughing, for the cold rain had wet through his coat.

Skippers like that didn't belong on the Luce ships. It was queer. And when Andy had said he was from Kennebunkport, and knew the owners, Stivers had thrown him off the ship. That was unusual, too. Andy found himself in front of an *estaminet* and decided he needed a cognac.

From his seat near the window he watched the cargo going aboard the *Sedalia*, and observed that she was already low in the water. Probably she would finish loading that afternoon, and sail on the evening tide. Andy crossed his long legs, and grinned.

"I hate to let Stivers—Al Stivers of New York—put it over me," he muttered to himself. "I wonder what he'd say if I said 'Howdy' to him again about one day's sail out of port. It would be a cinch to stow away."

With a quickened interest he watched the loading of the cargo. The after hold was full, and the iron hatch covers were being swung into place, but forward the ship's wheezing windlasses were still loading in wooden cases which were comparatively light, to judge by the size of the sling-loads.

"Dry goods, I guess," Andy soliliquized.

He recalled that similar boxes piled on the quay had been so labelled. It was rather an unusual cargo for a ship as old and slow as the *Sedalia*. Silk and manufactured clothing were valuable, and usually crossed on large new ships, even on liners. But what was even more to the point, a cased cargo, light in weight, meant that the cargo spaces would be crammed too full for him to hide in the hold, even though he could get there. Andy grinned to himself. It was easy to stow away on a ship you had sailed on, and probably knew better than the present set of officers themselves.

Idly he saw a case fall from the slings and crash on to the deck, but at the excitement such a trivial accident caused he craned his neck in interest. Al Stivers himself—for it was impossible to mistake his bulky figure—had run to the broken box.

Instantly a lanky mate had joined him. Both had thrown a furtive glance at the stevedores, and moved so that their bodies screened the broken package from their eyes. The mate had produced a hammer and nailed up the box, and then Stivers actually picked it up himself, carried it to the hatchway and passed it below.

"First skipper I ever saw handle cargo," muttered Andy. "I guess it must be silk, at that, and they were taking no chances on losing a bolt."

He finished his drink, and walked back into the town to get his clothes, a pair of blankets and a little food. Those he would need in the lifeboat where he intended to hide before the *Sedalia* went to sea.

* * *

IT WAS shortly after midnight and about an hour before high tide that a dock watchman saw a figure slip unobtrusively up the quay, climb a rope hanging from the *Sedalia's* low well deck, and disappear behind her bulwarks. For a moment the watchman thought of giving the alarm. But the man was carrying a sextant case, which marked him as an officer, and after getting aboard the ship he mounted the ladder toward the bridge. *Qu'importe?* Evidently only a mate ashore for a last hour at Marie's against the captain's orders.

If he had seen the figure dodge behind the whaleboat carried just aft of the bridge and watched him creep beneath the cover, Andy's trouble might have begun much sooner, but as it was he was lying comfortably asleep in the bottom of the whaleboat when the *Sedalia* put to sea, dreaming of Captain Stivers' chagrin when that surly officer should discover he was carrying Andy Prescott to Kennebunkport after all.

As it happened, the discovery was delayed longer than Andy expected or wished. All the next day while the ship tossed and squirmed across the Bay of Biscay he lay hidden. He could hear men passing on deck, and Stivers' gruff voice barking orders on the bridge, but no one raised the lifeboat cover. Late in the second night Andy was so tired of his cramped quarters that he decided to slip out on deck and allow himself to be found, bawled out, put to work and given some hot food. Hardtack and water from a lifeboat's breaker get unpalatable after three successive meals.

With this plan in mind he crawled from under the cover on the outboard side of the boat, next the rail, and was about to slip under the stern on to the open deck when he was halted by the footsteps of two men coming from aft.

"I was figuring to look over the boats tomorrow morning, Captain," one of the pair was explaining. "What's the rush? They won't be needed for a week anyways."

Stivers grunted.

"Suit yourself, Johansen. But being as I got to go out in this one myself, I'm taking no chances on empty breakers. A hundred miles in a lifeboat sounds easy while you're on deck, huh? *I've* done it before. We earn every cent we get. Suppose it's heavy weather off New York? We gotta abandon ship just the same. It would be better for you and me to jump overboard than bring this old wagon into port with this cargo. Instead of ten thousand, it'd be ten years we'd get!"

"Aw, the big chance is over. It's loaded and under hatches, ain't it?"

"—— little thanks to you!" growled Stivers. "You dropped cases faster than a bunch of thirsty Portygees loading liquor. Suppose they'd broken open, huh, and the customs had a look inside and seen old rags where the manifests called for silk? Suppose they'd found out a cargo worth half a million on the ship's papers really ain't worth nothing? We was so close to jail I could hear the lock-step scuffling. I was going to bust your face——"

"Aw, nothing happened," cut in the mate in an aggrieved tone.

"No, and nothing's going to happen while I'm skipper, but you make my belly sour, making me do your work! It's me on the gangway kicking off snooping friends of the owners! It's me swearing to false manifests! It's me that has got to prove how this ship comes to sink just out of port so the charterer can collect insurance on a cargo of silk that we never really loaded. The ship's old, but she's well found; the owners know it. All you do is open the bilge cocks, and you want to do it —— natural, too!"

Barratry! Behind the lifeboat Andy's lips shaped the word, but he held his breath lest he should make a sound. Gone were all thoughts of allowing himself to be discovered. No wonder Stivers had refused to carry a passenger on a ship he intended to scuttle. How such a man had obtained command was a mystery, for there wasn't a more uncompromisingly honest ship owner than bald-headed little Tobias Luce in the whole of New England.

To lose the *Sedalia* under suspicious circumstances would ruin the Luces, but nevertheless it could be they who would be accused of the barratry. The Luce Line was not making money. Cynical insurance men would accuse Tobias of scuttling the *Sedalia* for money enough to retire, not knowing, as Andy did, that the ambition of the old man's life was to build up a successful line to bequeath his son and daughter.

And while Tobias was being grilled on the witness stand, the suing charterer, owner of the cargo, would be howling to high heaven because of his "loss" on a cargo of silk worth thousands on the ship's papers, but which was still lying hidden in a French warehouse, or already crossing on another ship.

As captain, it did mean jail for Stivers if the falsity of the ship's papers was ever found out. When he discovered that a ship's officer, and a friend of the owners, was aboard—Andy was no coward, but he shuddered. A man like Stivers would rather risk murder on the high seas—where the log the captain keeps is evidence in any law court—rather than face proved charges of barratry.

Holding his breath, Andy started to creep aft, away from the lifeboat. At all cost he must not be found in a place where Stivers would know that his plans had been overheard. Andy edged behind a tub of line as the captain threw back the cover of the lifeboat. He had got five feet away, moving with infinite caution, when he coughed.

"Who's there!" whispered Stivers fiercely, and jumped to the deck. Andy drew himself into the darkest shadow, and gripped his mouth in his hand. Despite his efforts, the tickling in his throat increased.

"We can't let him tell the crew!" gasped Johansen, his voice staccato and trembling in the panic of a weak man cornered.

Andy coughed again.

Pistol in hand, the mate jumped for the sound, but before he could aim and fire Andy's tall figure sprang erect and his fist swung desperately to the angle of the mate's jaw. There was a flash of fire as the pistol exploded harmlessly.

Feet pounded along the deck from aft. Andy jumped the mate's body as it fell, and started running aft. His only hope was to warn the crew. But to the left, instead of in front as he expected, the red glare of the side light caught Stivers' face, contorted with rage. Andy swung and ducked, but his fist missed, and as Stivers leaped upon him, Andy felt a blue-white flash of fire in his head; and then thick darkness, through which he was sinking down, down, down.

CONSCIOUSNESS returned slowly and painfully. First, Andy was aware of a throbbing headache; next that he was lying in a bunk with a heavy bandage about his head; finally, that he was handcuffed. He remembered the footsteps he had heard running forward just before the captain had struck. When Stivers had knocked him down with the butt of a pistol, then, he had not dared to toss him overboard before witnesses.

Andy opened his eyes with a stifled groan and saw Stivers sitting beside his bunk, chewing at an unlighted cigar. Andy started so that his handcuffs clinked. He had expected he would be in the forecastle, and not between sheets in an officer's bunk.

"You're —— persistent, ain't you, Bud," Stivers snarled out of the corner of his mouth, a cold glare in his blue eyes. "I was hoping you was going to croak, too."

Andy turned his face to the wall without answering. He heard the captain rise, and braced himself for a blow, but intead Stivers only grunted with a sort of grim humor.

"I wish I'd soaked you harder, Bud. But your bean was too thick, and it's too late now. D'ye remember what happened?"

Andy stirred feverishly on the bunk.

"Why did the mate pull his gun, Captain?" he bluffed in a weak voice. "I heard you coming and was trying to get away aft when he jumped me."

"So you didn't hear me say I was wishing I'd taken you aboard?" inquired Stivers softly.

It was a leading question, but Andy saw that the captain was seeking to trap him into admitting he had been able to overhear what had been said.

"I heard you two talking but the wash along the sides made so much noise I couldn't hear what you said," Andy lied.

Possibly he could bluff his way out yet. If he could persuade the skipper he was nothing but a stowaway——

"What's the idea of the handcuffs?" he added with as much indignation as he could muster.

Stivers watched him keenly, chewing slowly on his cigar for what seemed hours. Then he gave the quick nod of a man that has made up his mind, and grinned—grimly, but not unkindly; in the way a man does when he has a worthy antagonist, but has beaten him.

"You lanky down-Easters are pretty cute, ain't you?" he stated. "It's no use, Bud. You can't play poker. You're in the log as a crazy stowaway who attacked the mate and was subdued by the captain after a struggle." Stivers chuckled to himself. "And the whole crew can swear to Johansen's black eye. We put on the irons because you were dangerous, but we couldn't put a crazy man in with the crew, and him liable to murder somebody any minute, now could we?"

A leer accompanied the words. Evidently the skipper was enjoying this mental torture, and yet Andy was conscious that in some queer way the other respected and even liked him. Not that that promised any hope for the future.

Whatever else he might be, Stivers was no coward, and would admire a strong man even when he was forced to knock him on the head for interfering with his plans.

"Well then, what's the answer?" asked Andy.

"Wish I knew. You see how it is, Bud. I can't bring you ashore, now can I?" The Captain's voice became threatening. "But listen here! Keep quiet—don't shout for the crew—and I'll take care of you, for a while anyhow. One yell, and you'll be gagged. See?"

The door closed behind him, and Andy heard the key turn in the lock. He tried to think. The ship was to be sunk. Stivers was capable of leaving him aboard "by accident," ironed and locked in his stateroom when she went down. If he could get loose or warn the crew he might—but Andy's head ached too intensely. Despite himself he dropped in a deep sleep.

During the next six days, however, he had time enough to lay plans. There was nothing else to do from sunrise to midnight. His head healed rapidly, but the skin of his wrists became raw and chafed from his persistent efforts to pick or break the handcuffs.

Except for a Philippine steward who brought him his meals and a half hour's walk on deck every night handcuffed to the mate, he was left alone. The first day, Andy had mustered up enough Spanish to warn the steward that the ship was to be sunk, but the alarmed expression with which the man received his words was not, as Andy at first hoped, due to terror inspired by the warning.

Instead, Alonso backed away cautiously, and his hand crept to the knife under his shirt lest this madman assault him as he had the mate. Stivers' declaration that the stowaway was insane had seemed credible to the crew. No sane stowaway would punch a mate, and with a subtlety which one would not have expected from the captain's brutal face, he had refused to allow Andy the use of a razor.

Therefore, at sunset when the ship was approximately thirty-six hours from port, the crew were idly watching a lean New Englander with a quarter of an inch of reddish blond whiskers concealing everything about his face except a prominent nose and bloodshot gray eyes.

His head was still bandaged. His wrists were bloody. He was pacing up and down the deck manacled to the mate, whose hand rested on his revolver, and whose black eye, now turning a greenish purple, was an object lesson in what this madman might be expected to do if he got loose. Andy's eyes roved desperately from right to left; he walked nervously.

With a sudden unexpected leap he dashed to the break of the well-deck, dragging the mate after him.

"Men! The cargo's nothing but rags!" he screamed. "The skipper's going to sink her off New York for the insurance!"

With a snarl the mate snatched out his pistol and knocked Andy down. Stooping, he dragged him senseless along the deck and flung him into his cabin again.

A quartermaster off duty, sprawled against the anchor windlass forward, shrugged, picked up the jacknife he had dropped at Andy's shout, and resumed cutting up a pipeful of plug tobacco.

"Crazy as a loon," he commented. "Kind of bad actor, too, ain't he, Swenson?"

The Swede's face was pale, and his jaws worked nervously. "He bane crazy, *ja*, und dot iss fery bad luck for der ships," he ruminated. "Crazy volks haf second sight. Vat is der cargo?"

"Rags, for all I know," chuckled the quartermaster. "Hey, Harrigan! Swenson here's saying our Loony is a Jonah. He's a prophet. You better wireless your girl in New York, for we'll never see port. The Loony says we'll sink, and the Squarehead believes him!"

"Squarehead yourselfs!" shouted Swenson belligerently; and that was the end of the discussion.

Andy had played his last card, and the only change it made was that he was no longer permitted to exercise on deck. Previously there had been much discussion in the forecastle concerning him; but that night the crew kidded Swenson until every man of them convinced himself that the skipper was right and Andy was crazy. The older and more superstitious sailors finally conceded that crazy Sewdes might possibly have second sight, for Swenson told a multitude of tales of lurid disasters—but as for Yankees, a crazy Yankee was just a nut.

IN THE meantime Andy sat in black, hopeless despondency. If Stivers scuttled the vessel a hundred miles from New York, he had about twenty-four hours more to live. That the captain would allow him to take a place in the lifeboats he did not believe. He might be left locked in his room, handcuffed, when the ship went down. More probably there would be a pretense at release, and then in the confusion a pistol butt would strike him behind the ear, and he would be heaved over the side.

As for preventing the scuttling, or keeping the ship afloat, a week of constant thought had simply convinced him it would be impossible, even if he were free and unhindered on deck. One man could not place a collision mat, or improvise the gear at a moment's notice.

The loss of the *Sedalia* would break Tobias Luce's heart. And his daughter Margaret would wonder what had become of Andy. Vanished after leaving hospital in St. Nazaire. That would be all she could find. He wondered gloomily if she'd trouble to look him up. Probably she wouldn't. Just because she had always been friendly was no reason to suppose——

From forward the throbbing sound of the *Sedalia's* engines and the steady hiss of the water overside was split by a frantic shout. The words were indistinguishable but Andy could sense the terror and excitement with which the lookout had hailed. He was prepared for Stivers' bull-like roar of "Hard-a-Port!" He felt the ship's way check as the helm went over, and jumped from his bunk as frightened feet pounded by his door.

Then the *Sedalia* struck; a sharp blow that knocked Andy down.

There was a clang and the snarling crunch of riven steel at the starboard bow. The whole ship seemed to lift under his feet, twist terribly to the right, then subside; stopped dead in full career. Bells aft jingled as the engines were rung to slow speed; men shouted, but there was none of those other, more distant shouts which would have been heard had the accident been a collision with another vessel.

Sharp as the blow had been, in spite of the ripping plates, the stroke had lacked the heavy impact and the grinding release of a collision at sea.

Perhaps for a second, Andy stood irresolute. Then he snapped off his light, backed to the farthest corner of his stateroom, and hurled himself against the flimsy lock of his door. It snapped, and he tumbled out on the dark deck.

With one glance over the side, he ran awkwardly forward, holding his manacled hands close to his chest, and dodged into the darker shadows of the forward well-deck. Over his head Stivers was bellowing.

"What's the damage, Mr. Johansen?"

Flashlights were dancing on the forecastle head. A panting sailor carrying a sounding-rod brushed by Andy, tripped on a ringbolt in his haste, fell headlong and with an oath, picked himself up and ran forward.

"Derelict, Captain! We rammed a floating spar. It's sticking clear through the side," screamed Johansen.

"Steady, Mr. Mate, steady," Stivers boomed. "Take your time, Mister! Sound the forehold—is it a bad leak?"

"The sounding-rod's broken!"

Stivers gave a bark of disgruntled disdain.

"Well, get another then, Mister," he shouted with slow reassurance, and then after a pause he called again. This time to Andy's ears there was a sinister double meaning in the tone in which he gave his order. "Inspect the holds personally for damage, Mr. Johansen!"

Was this the premeditated scuttling of the ship? Andy wondered. It was almost a day too soon. Yet even now they were within life-boat distance of shore. Had Stivers abandoned his plan to open the sea-valves, and deliberately steered into a derelict?

At some risk of discovery, Andy leaned over the bulwark, and saw a broken spar from a dismasted sailing vessel sticking out at an angle from the *Sedalia's* hull, its butt punched through the bow plates, rising and falling half out of water as the vessel rolled. No, obviously the accident was unforeseen, but the captain had seen his opportunity to take advantage of it to sink his ship. Andy was positive from the position of the spar that the blow was not serious.

"The forepeak's full of water!" reported the mate.

"Sure it's full of water! I know that from here," snapped Stivers irritably. "Can't you sound the forehold?"

He wants to flood it, thought Andy. For it was obvious that the forepeak would be flooded, and equally certain that this small compartment in the extreme bow of the ship was not large enough to do more than pull the *Sedalia* down by the head a foot or two. They could even steam ahead safely, for the strong collision bulkhead would keep the water from the rest of the ship.

What Stivers wanted the mate to do was to open the seacocks in the forehold under pretense of making an inspection. That would be enough to sink the vessel. Stivers evidently did not believe that the spar had punctured the bulkhead. Of course, it was possible that it had. In that event the ship was doomed. If the panic-stricken mate should make an erroneous report——

ANDY started. There was a desperate chance that he could double-cross Stivers even now, and slight as it was, it was the only chance of saving the *Sedalia* for old Tobias Luce.

Leaping to the deck plate, Andy threw his weight against the racket wheel by means of which the seacocks in the forehold could be opened by a man on deck. He cursed the carelessness that had allowed the gear to be painted. It stuck, and Johansen's cursing, as he fumbled at the forehold sounding-well warned Andy that he had no time to lose. Bracing his feet against the bulkhead he managed to pull the valve loose, and unscrewed it to its fullest capacity.

"There! Now she's sinking," Andy panted, and ducked out of sight.

"Six inches in the forehold, Captain," reported the mate a moment after. "No—seven inches—*it's rising fast, sir,*" he cried shrilly.

"Rig out and overhaul the lifeboats," Stivers ordered. "We can't pull out that spar, or plug the leak while it's there," he added as if to himself.

"Does that leak come from forward, Mr. Johansen?" he called meaningly. "We might have pulled some rivets."

"It's from forward," the mate reported. "*Nine inches, sir!*"

"You can send your S. O. S.," Stivers grunted to the wireless operator.

Johansen was kneeling at the sounding-well, a lantern by his side, taking sounding after sounding and, as the water deepened alarmingly, Andy could see that the mate was more relieved than frightened that the vessel was going down, since the sinking would now be without any criminal act on his part. The same pleasure sounded in the tone of Stivers' occasional orders as he directed the manning of the boats.

There had been an effort to pump out the hold, but the water was rising too fast. Already the ship was rolling with a leaden sluggishness. She would roll slowly, and then hang poised, canted at an angle, for an appreciable moment before she rolled back, to pause again like something weary and heavy at the opposite period of her swing. The whole deck had begun to cant forward as the flooding hold dragged down her nose.

The engines had stopped, and now the black-gang began to appear on deck, to join the nervous, whispering groups that stood by the lifeboats. The *Sedalia* was sinking fast, but still Al Stivers waited on the bridge. Johansen stopped sounding and joined his lifeboat crew. Still Stivers waited, until the men began to mutter.

"Stand by. No hurry," was the retort from the bridge.

The long delay was making Andy desperate. He had not anticipated such a display of steadfastness and seaman's nerve on the part of Captain Stivers, although now that it was taking place Andy realized that haste and panic should not have been expected from the burly criminal.

Andy's plan had been built upon the weakness of the mate, and the fact that Stivers himself would be forced to remain on the bridge. When the sea cocks were opened, Andy had hoped that as soon as the water began to rise in the forehold Stivers would abandon ship, leaving Andy behind to drown. Then, once the lifeboats had gone, he had planned to shut the valve, and wait to be picked up by one of the ships now speeding to answer the call of S. O. S.

But Stivers apparently intended to wait until the *Sedalia* settled under his feet. As he had said, he was taking no chances.

"Time to get the stowaway out," he now barked.

"He's gone! The door's smashed," came the answer.

Stivers stood silent, and Andy's hopes rose. But——

"Search the ship, then, and be lively. I won't leave without him!"

Andy jumped hastily for the deck valve, but there was not time to shut it. A lantern bobbed over the break of the well-deck, and he was compelled to dash aft, where he was found hiding behind the hatch combing.

"Got him? That's well," approved the captain. "All right—put him in my boat, and—all hands abandon ship!"

As helping hands lifted Andy from the logy deck into the lifeboat he dropped on a thwart and bowed his head in his hands. Hurriedly the crew sprang in after him and overhauled the oars. In a daze, he saw Stivers leave the bridge and leisurely inspect the well-deck. He knew that the captain was proving by the evidence of his own eyes that the seacock was open, but now that he was in the lifeboat it really made little difference, as far as Andy could see, whether the valve was open or not.

The *Sedalia* was going down, and by the irony of events it was his own hand which had scuttled her. Captain Stivers walked unhurriedly to his place in the boat and gave the order to lower away. Once Andy caught his eye, and it seemed to him the captain was chuckling.

That ridicule was the spur Andy needed to set his wits to work. He was not beaten yet! For the last time he tore at his handcuffs, but vainly. Nevertheless, as the creaking falls lowered the boat to the sea he gathered himself together. His last card had become the crew's conviction that he was really insane. As the boat neared the water he gave the best imitation he could of an insane laugh. The man next Andy started, and drew away, for in that darkness, with the lifeboat bumping the sides and the seas splashing below, the shrill cachinations of mirth set the hair to prickling on the scalp.

Drawing a long breath, Andy gathered his legs beneath him, and the instant the boat struck the water, he jumped to his feet with a shrill scream and dived over the side. With his manacled hands held straight in front, he swam as best he could under water, heading toward the stern.

Shouts and confusion arose behind him, dominated by Stivers' bellow—

"Out oars! Give way together! Let him go, men—we've done our best. Fend off there in the bow before we smash. Give way, —— you, *give way!*"

It was hard swimming in that heaving sea, and his shoes dragged at Andy's legs like lead. He was gasping as he rounded the stern. He began to wonder, not in fear, but in an impersonal way, if he had been watching the whole drama from above, whether this fellow called Andy Prescott who was splashing weakly in the water was going to be able to swim to the after lifeboat falls or not.

He expected the other lifeboats had drawn away from the ship, and he could hear the blocks of the falls thumping against the ship's side at the water's edge, but that did not promise to do him much good if he had not strength to reach them.

How Andy managed to swim that last ten feet in the darkness, how he managed to find and catch the hook on the end of the boat falls as it swung to and fro above him, how he mustered strength to climb them with hands, feet and teeth and tumble over the bulwark above, was a nightmare he was never able to recall clearly.

He did it. He staggered along the deserted decks and shut the sea valve, but by now the *Sedalia's* bow was all but awash, and she moved so heavily under Andy's feet that he expected at any moment to hear the after bulkhead go, or feel the ship lurch on her side, and sink. Over the rail he could see the boat lights in a little cluster half a mile away where Stivers was waiting to see the ship go down.

Wearily Andy walked the sloping decks to the blacksmith's shop, and fumbled in the darkness until he found a heavy pair of tinsmith's sheers. After several attempts he was able to put the links of the handcufs between the jaws and stamp on the handle with his feet until the chain was cut. Well, with that accomplished he was free, at least, and master of the ship as long as she stayed afloat.

As near as he could judge it was about an hour before dawn, and in all probability no ship would arrive on the scene for at least four hours. While it was dark, Stivers would lie where he was encouraging his men, and wondering more and more to himself why the ship was so slow in sinking. If she was still afloat at dawn—and Andy hoped most whole-heartedly that she would be—Stivers would board her again to finish the job.

Andy climbed to the radio shack and spent the next half hour sending a short message over and over in a clumsy amateur fashion. He heard messages—possibly replies—in the phones, but they were too fast to read, and he kept pounding out a brief report of the attempted barratry, addressed to Tobias Luce.

"That will make trouble when they try to collect insurance, anyhow," Andy chuckled to himself.

At the first flush of dawn he left the key and went forward. Stivers might have seen sparks from the wireless. Even if he had not and boarded the ship in the belief that Andy had been drowned, the captain would have his pistol handy and would use it without hesitation.

THE thin pearl-gray mists of dawn were lying on the water, but through them Andy could easily discern three of the *Sedalia's* lifeboats lying on their oars about five hundred yards off the port quarter, while the fourth boat, carrying Captain Stivers, was pulling slowly under the dangling falls on the port side forward. Taking great care to keep out of sight, Andy armed himself with a hardwood wedge from the hatch, which provided a club about a foot long, two inches thick at the butt and tapering to a point that gave a good grip for his hands.

He hid himself just inside the door to the crew's quarters, which he hooked open. The deck plate from which the seacocks in the forehold were operated was on the bulkhead outside, not four feet from where he stood.

Andy strained his ears. If Stivers should order the entire lifeboat crew aboard, he was out of luck; but he did not believe the crooked skipper would allow any witness to the barratry he had so nearly carried into effect to set foot on deck.

Ostensibly, Stivers would be making an inspection to see whether or not the crew could save the *Sedalia.* Actually as soon as he was aboard the captain would open a bilge cock and make the sinking sure, but to make the ship sink in a natural manner it would be the forehold that he would flood first.

The captain's shoes clumped down the well-deck ladder, and Andy poised his club expectantly. With a lighted cigar in the corner of his mouth Stivers was strolling across the slanting deck as leisurely as if the voyage was over and a pilot was aboard to end his responsibility and take the *Sedalia* into dock.

The blue steel butt of an automatic peeped from the right hand pocket of his coat, but Stivers' thumbs were hooked nonchalantly into his trouser pockets. Evidently Andy's wirelessing had passed unnoticed and unheard. The captain believed he had drowned hours ago. Stivers stopped before the deck plate, and grunted with surprize.

"That —— Johansen might have made sure—the yellow-belly," he muttered contemptuously to himself as he began to open the valve.

Andy tiptoed out behind him. He had too much respect for the burly skipper to take any chances. He struck viciously at the back of Stivers' head, but as the blow fell Stivers drew his thick head into the protection of his shoulders, and turned with a snarl. Some sixth sense had warned him. Perhaps he had seen that last swift movement out of the corner of his eye.

His movement twisted his head out of the path of the club. His cap was knocked off and the wedge brought up against the bulkhead with a loud clang and a stinging force which pulled it from Andy's hands. He had hardly recovered his balance when Stivers leaped at him, his hands clutching for Andy's throat.

Andy met the rush with a smashing left that landed fair on the captain's mouth, but Stivers was not stopped. His hands caught Andy's shirt, which ripped to the waist as Andy pulled away, and jabbed a short uppercut to the wind that made Stivers grunt and recoil, cover up and, without attempting to strike a blow, rush at Andy with the intention of closing and throwing the lighter man to the deck where his own greater weight assured easy victory.

Andy sidestepped Stivers' rush, and swung his right overhand to the base of the skipper's ear. He felt a tearing stab of pain as a bone in his fist cracked with the force of the blow, and had a moment of panic as he realized his right would be useless. But Stivers had fallen like an ox and lay twitching.

Panting, Andy bound him hand and foot, plucked the pistol from his pocket, and dragged the senseless body into the obscurity of the forecastle. He was expecting the mate to follow the captain at any moment, for the men in the lifeboat would be impatient and suspicious at a long delay. Andy tied a handkerchief as best he could about his broken hand and waited.

But when Johansen tiptoed fearfully down the ladder, Andy had only to step out of the doorway and shove his pistol viciously into the mate's stomach. The man begged for his life, and in thirty seconds was bound and gagged beside his captain. Once more there was a long delay, punctuated after five minutes by shouts from the men waiting over the side, who called for the captain, for the mate, with a mounting dread in their voices.

Finally came the sound Andy had feared from the first. There was an authoritative order to "Hook on, and go over the side of her."

The heads of a dozen sailors popped over the rail, and the crew of a lifeboat jumped down on deck, lead by a bald-headed little man whose oil-smeared dungarees marked him as the engineer on watch when the ship had been abandoned. He peered up and down the deserted deck, his brow puckered in bewilderment.

"Captain! Cap'n Stivers! Whaur are ye, Captain?" he shouted in an honest Glasgow burr.

Andy stepped out of the doorway and raised his pistol. "Hands *up!*" he snapped.

Behind the little engineer the sailors recoiled. Their hands leaped upward, and they gasped, "The loony!" in chorus.

"Keep your hands up," ordered Andy. "Barratry's been tried here, and I represent the owners. Hands *up*, I said," he added sharply, shifting his aim to the engineer's head, for the officer had not moved, and his hands were still at his sides.

To Andy's amazement the man's face set grimly.

"Follow me, lads. He's insane," he whispered sharply over his shoulder, and walked directly for Andy, disregarding the gun.

"Go back or I fire."

"Shoot and be dommed. Ha'e ye no done damage enough, mon?" pleaded the other.

Behind the engineer the group of sailors swayed irresolutely as the bolder spirits, led by Harrigan, lowered their hands and pushed through the crowd to go to his assistance. Unless Andy shot the little man in his tracks, he could see that his mastery over the ship was ended, for the other intended to walk forward until he could snatch the pistol. He probably suspected Andy of having murdered the captain and mate. For Andy to shoot in cold blood was unthinkable, but whether the engineer was an accomplice of Stivers in the sinking of the ship he did not know. If he were——

"You're a brave man, Scotty," Andy remarked with admiration, keeping his pistol leveled.

The other walked steady forward.

"That's as may be. Will ye put awa' yer gun?"

Andy decided to risk everything on one speech.

"Brave—but are you honest?" he insinuated.

An angry flush rose to the cheekbones of the engineer, and his pace quickened as he sought to come to grips with a man who had insulted him.

Andy put his pistol in his pocket.

"I don't intend to shoot, sir," he stated. "I've been risking my life to keep this ship afloat, and I think you'll do as much. Will you take my word that she is undamaged, but for the leak forward, and start your pumps?"

"You're crazy, mon," replied the engineer, but Andy's heart leaped at the words, for the tone implied that it was not he himself who was crazy, but his statement.

"Will you start your pumps to prove it?" he challenged.

"And what ha'e ye done with the skipper?" the little man asked suspiciously.

"Put him and the mate in irons. I learned they'd loaded the ship with a false, worthless cargo and intended to sink her to hide it. When she struck I opened the seacocks myself to make them think she was going down."

"Ye what?" shouted the engineer, and the men behind him murmured.

"Certainly!" cried Andy. "Then I swam back and shut them. Ain't she still afloat? Look at the manifests and then at the cargo, if ye don't believe me—and get your men aboard!"

"We wull," said the engineer shortly.

"You'll find the skipper and the mate in the fo'csle," Andy went on. "But will you investigate in spite of what they say? Wireless the owners, too. They know me—and I tell you Stivers was planning to sink you."

"We'll do all thot," replied the engineer but his voice was doubting as a man who is half convinced.

With a smile, Andy stepped forward and handed him the pistol.

"Investigation is all I ask, Mr. ——"

"MacDermut—Angus MacDermut of Glasgow," the engineer acknowledged.

AND that is how the *Sedalia* came to limp into port, a day overdue. There remained three days of suspicion and tension aboard her. Stivers glowered about the decks as he supervised the removal of the spar. MacDermut went so far as to take away the captain's pistol, but he did not dare to deprive him of command, and even Andy was willing that the captain should bring the ship into port, now that even he would not dare to attempt to sink the vessel again.

Nevertheless, Andy spent most of his time on the bridge, and for his presence there, and for his practical control of the ship, he had the authority given him by a message received just after the falsity of the ship's papers had been verified by MacDermut, and when the forehold was half pumped out. The message was signed "Thomas Luce." It read:

> Prescott trustworthy has authority to represent owners now and will take command of ship on arrival in port.

"Weel, ut makes yer standing offeecial,' Mac Dermut conceded, "but yer ower young fer command."

"Haven't I earned it?" asked Andy indignantly, with the boyish grin of the sailor who has attained his great ambition.

"Maybe."

MacDermut seemed to begrudge the praise, but in the way he slapped Andy on the back was respect and friendliness.

TUMBLEWEED

by Harold Willard Gleason

TUMBLEWEED a-twistin' and a-rollin' and a-dartin'
When the breeze sends puffs of dust along the sun-parched plain;
Tumbleweed is restless—in the mornin' I'll be startin',
Roamin' like a tumbleweed across the sand again.

Minin' down in Mexico—pay dirt an' somethin' over;
Moonlight, curving Spanish lips and languishin' guitars;
Easy life and easy love—that couldn't hold a rover,
Roamin' like a tumbleweed beneath the silent stars!

Tended bar in Yukon, lights and action every minute,
Games and gin and girls—one kind—an ounce of dust a day;
Grub, and rake-offs on the side—but such a *sameness* in it!
Roamin' like a tumbleweed beneath the witch-lights' play.

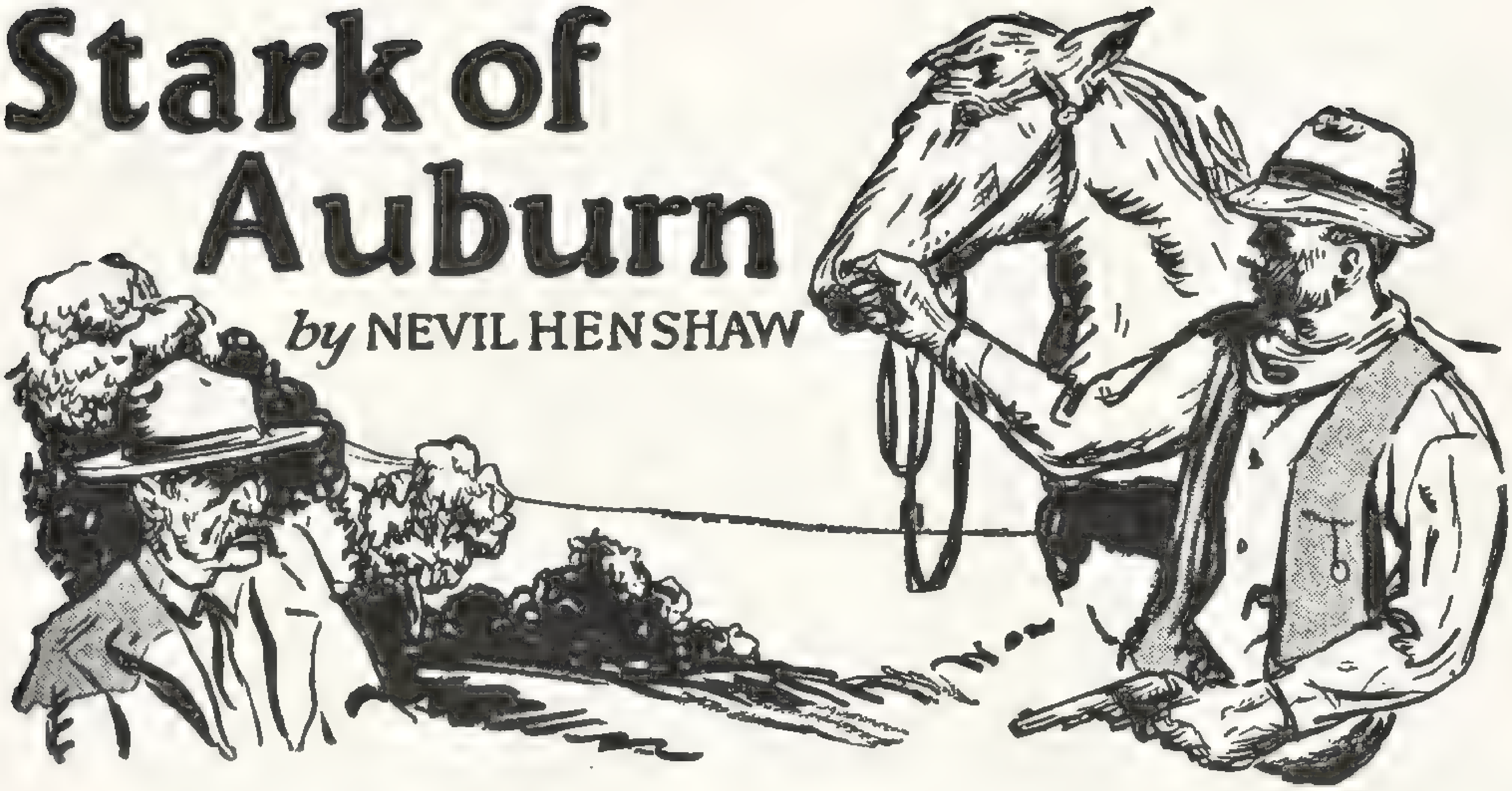
Ridin' range in Turner's, Mont.—boss-wrangler, too, they made me—
I could straddle hosses some, and throw a rope and brand;
First-class outfit, first-class cook; yet, the night they paid me,
Roamin' like a tumbleweed across this unfenced land!

Shot a man in Texas, he was holdin' extry aces,
Blue-jowled sheriff locked me up in his calaboose;
But mornin' found me far away from such unhealthy places,
Roamin' like a tumbleweed—on Blue Jaws' own cayuse!

Tumbleweed, tumbleweed, rollin', twistin', turnin',
Somehow never satisfied; seekin'—who can tell?
Ridin' ever on and on, spurred by nameless yearnin',
Roamin' like a tumbleweed, till all trails end in hell!

Stark of Auburn

by NEVIL HENSHAW



Author of "Peasant Wit," "Come Home to Roost," etc.

I'D NEVER tried it if I hadn't been desperate. Every one in St. Pierre told me that signin' on at Auburn was just the first step to signin' off again. But I'd already applied at every other place in that part of Louisiana, and it was up to me to land a job or go back West, where I'd come from.

Once I'd made up my mind and started, I was so afraid some one would beat me to it that I loped mighty near all the way. It was a fine place about five miles from town with a cypress swamp cuttin' it off behind and the cane-fields reachin' away as far as you could see on both sides of the road. The big house was in a grove of live oaks halfway between the road and the swamp with the stables and quarters scattered round an old-fashioned mill.

I turned in and started down the plantation road, which was built up above the level of the field with a ditch on the side. Halfway in I raised a man who was havin' trouble with his horse.

From what I could see the man wanted to jump the ditch, and the horse was puttin' in an objection by kickin' and buckin' and spraddlin' out on all four legs. The man was usin' his quirt like a mule-driver and, just as I trotted up, he swung into line and flashed in a lick that sent the horse out from the road as if he'd been shot from a gun.

It was nicely done, barrin' the floggin', and if the man had sat tight, he'd made it easy. But once in the air he slipped forward on to the horse's neck, and the two of 'em went down into the ditch.

I was out of the saddle in a moment, but the horse was quicker. Almost before I hit the ground he'd scrambled to the level of the field where he begun croppin' the grass as unconcerned as if he'd been let out to graze.

The man didn't make a move till I'd jumped down and hauled him to his feet. Then he got busy all at once, battin' his eyes and stretchin' his arms and legs, like he wanted to make sure he hadn't broke anything. He was a small wiry man with gray hair and eyes and a stubby gray mustache. His suit was gray and his hat likewise and, when you'd looked at him a little, he kind of blurred all together into a color that made you think of a hornet's nest.

There was hornet too in his thin-cut nose and narrow jaw and mouth and in the quick, sharp way he moved and handled himself. That he was the boss, Major Stark, I saw at a glance. That he'd taken a drop too much I knew a second later, although there wasn't much to show it. He had a cold one, which is the worst kind.

"Well," he asks mighty short, "what can I do for you?"

This kind of took me back. I'd expected the first business in order would be what I'd done for him.

"Come on," he snaps. "What are you after? If you're trespassing, the place is posted, and I'm looking for some one to make an example of. Otherwise I'm the owner and the man you want to see."

I was plumb groggy, but I didn't let on. It looked like I couldn't be too sparin' of words.

"I want a job," says I.

"Name?"

"Nicholas Wilson," I answers.

"*Humh*," says the major, and changed the subject.

"What did you think of that fall just now?" he asks.

"Your fault," says I. "If you'd kept your saddle he'd made it and to spare."

The major's eyes flashed, but when he spoke his voice was as cold and even as before.

"I differ with you," says he. "A good horse would have made it anyhow. Have you a pistol on you?"

I pulled my old .45.

"Good," says the major. "If you want a job, you can begin by shooting that horse."

I never said a word. I didn't even give him a look. I just climbed out of the ditch and grabbed the horse's bridle.

"Steady boy," says I under my breath. "I ain't goin' to hurt you. You'll see."

Then I cocked the gun slow and careful so the click would sound its loudest.

"All right," says the major. "You needn't go any further. I'll give him another chance."

He climbed up himself and raked me with a look that seemed to start at my belt and travel both ways at once.

"Well," he asks, "what sort of job are you after?"

"Field overseer," I answers.

The major thought a second and then got on his horse.

"If you're suited with seventy-five a month, I'll try you," says he. "Report at my office at noon."

I PUT in the time, lookin' over the place, which was the queerest combination of care and neglect I'd ever run across. Mostly things was all right, with the fields as clean as a flower garden and the gear in good trim. And then you'd run across a cut that wasn't even half worked or some new and expensive machine lyin' out in the weather. It sure had me guessin'.

At noon I went to the major's office, which was in a little brick buildin' on the big house lawn. There was just one room with maps and plats fastened all over the walls, and I found the major with a young man dressed in field clothes. He was tall and broad-shouldered, and he had one of those good, honest faces that make you feel like shakin' hands.

"My son, John," says the major.

Then he waits a moment and goes on:

"John has the ambition to be a modern planter, Mr. Wilson."

It wasn't so much what he said as the way he said it. There was a sneer in his voice that was like a slap in the face. The son turned red and reached for his hat.

"If that's all, father, I think I'll go," says he, and the major grunted and turned to the maps on the wall.

"Here's the place on paper, Mr. Wilson," he explains. "Follow me, and I'll give you the lie of the land. But first I want to tell you something. When I give an order I want it carried out at once and without argument. Never try to instruct me. When I need advice I'll ask for it. That's all there is to getting on with me. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," says I, "especially as it's your place."

"One thing more," he goes on. "Would you have shot that horse this morning if I hadn't stopped you?"

"Speakin' truthfully, and not meanin' any offense, I'd never done it as long as there was a chance of shootin' you first," says I.

The major give a short, cracklin' laugh that sounded like he'd trod on a stick.

"I thought so," says he. "That's why I took you on. But if you had held back an instant, you would never have landed the job."

That was the major, if you can understand him. I did, though it would plumb beat me to tell you how.

II

IT DIDN'T take me long to find out why people couldn't stay at Auburn. The place was all right, but the way it was run was sure discouragin'.

The major was supposed to look after everything in general, and his son, Mr. John, the field in particular, but it didn't work out like that. Let Mr. John give me an order at ten and by ten-thirty, just when the work was well started, the major would ride up and cancel it and have the whole business put through some other way.

It made trouble and confusion, to say nothing of the extra work, and the pity of it was that most of Mr. John's ideas was strictly first-class. He'd gone through two years of agriculture at the State college, and he had the gift of makin' real use of what he'd learned.

But the major couldn't see it. He was Stark of Auburn, and what was good enough for him and the Starks before him was good enough for any one. When Mr. John understood this and got rid of his fancy notions, he'd be fit to run the place. The book stuff was all nonsense. Any planter who knew enough about his business to print it would be lucky if he found time to write his letters.

So there it was and, naturally enough, I had to pick my side. It was one of those propositions where you couldn't stay on the fence. At first I was for the major. He meant my duty and my job. But it didn't take me long to find out he was just as bull headed as he was wrong. After that I was ready to quit. Then I had a talk with Mr. John.

It was in the field one mornin', after the major had ruined one of his best and newest schemes. Mr. John had his pride, but he'd got to the point where he had to speak out or blow up.

"Nick," says he, "this thing is getting the best of me. It hasn't always been this way. Up to the time that I got back from Baton Rouge my father and I were like brothers. And now look at us.

"I can't do what the old gentleman wants me to. It's against everything I've learned. If I was to plant like my grandfather, why was I sent away?

"And the hard part of it is that my father doesn't know that he's unfair. He's Stark of Auburn, which means that you can't *tell* him anything. Once you *show* him that he's wrong, he'll admit it and come round. He's just as square as he's hard headed."

"Do you think so?" I asks.

"I know it," he answers. "I'm a Stark of Auburn too, as far as that goes. I understand the breed. But it takes a long time to show things on a plantation. I'm only hoping that I'll get a chance somehow to make him see."

Followin' this I decided to stick and do what I could for Mr. John. If the major was square, he was doubly so, and I put everything I had into making the old man see the light.

But things went right on gettin' worse instead of better. Now that I'd settled down to my job, it seemed as if my chief duty was to upset the field. And as the major had shut down his old-fashioned mill and was sellin' his crop to the refineries, the field was the whole plantation.

Mr. John was game. Each time the major sent him down he come back smilin'. And then the old man would get sore and go to his bottle and hit him a harder crack. Before very long they was both on the ragged edge. It just needed some little thing to bring on the end.

Then, right in the middle of grindin', when we was at our busiest, it come.

III

IT WAS one Saturday when I was comin' from town with the pay roll. Mr. John and I took turns with it, and on this particular mornin' I was late in gettin' away. So, followin' a habit in such cases, I left the parish road on my way home for a short cut that would bring me in at the back of the plantation.

Havin' made the rear of the place, I turned off on a bridle path that led up to the quarters. It was just a trail through the bushes, and I'd rounded a bend where a field path cut in from the left when some one called to me.

"Hi! Wait, Mr. Nick," he yells.

I pulled up, lookin' round, and just then a shotgun barrel poked out of the bushes on my right and covered me. Followin' it come a nigger named "Bad-Eye," one of the town trash that we'd taken on for the rush of grindin'.

I knew enough not to reach for my gun. But I did what I could.

"Bad-Eye," says I, "pull out, and I'll give you a start. You know you can't get away with this."

Just to show me he could, Bad-Eye stepped forward and shoved his gun barrel against my side.

"Hand me that money, Mr. Nick,"

says he. "I ain't goin' to kill you less'n I has to, so be quick."

The money was in a bag on the pommel of my saddle, and I reached for it with one hand, keepin' the other well up in the air. It was all there was to it. That gun was screwed into my ribs, and I knew that at my first wrong move Bad-Eye would blow me in two.

As I lifted the money bag I looked in front of me, and there was Mr. John just roundin' the bend. When he caught sight of us he jerked in his horse and reached for his hip. I saw the flash of his gun as he pulled it and closed my eyes. Likewise I believe I tried to pray. I could feel that charge of shot tearin' through my body as plain as if it had already come.

Then the pressure let up on my side; the money was snatched from my hand; I heard a cracklin' of bushes and a poundin' of hoofs; I opened my eyes to find Bad-Eye gone and Mr. John ridin' up toward me.

I yanked out my gun as I jumped from the saddle, and I was half way inside the bushes after Bad-Eye when a voice stopped me.

"Wait! The sheriff will get him," it says, and I turned to see the major.

He was comin' in from the left along the field path, and there was somethin' about the look of his eye and the set of his jaw that made me wish I'd kept on the way I'd started. Mr. John spoke to him as he pulled up.

"Well, father," says he, "it seems that we were too late."

The major didn't answer for a while. He just sat there borin' into him with his eyes.

"*Humk,*" says he at last; "it looks to me as if you got here too soon."

Mr. John tightened. You could see he knew somethin' was comin'—somethin' bad.

"What do you mean?" he asks.

The major waited again before answerin'. It kind of made you think he was takin' aim.

"John," says he, "I've known all along that you were a fool. But I never thought that you were a coward. You're the first Stark I ever heard of who was one."

Mr. John started to break in on him, but he held up his hand.

"No," he goes on, "don't say anything. I saw all that happened just now. You may try to tell me how you let the pay roll get away from you with your pistol in your hand, but it won't get you anywhere. There's only one way to explain it."

Mr. John had been excited and red. Now he got quiet and gray.

"Father," says he, "I've stood a lot from you. I was prepared to stand a good deal more. Now I'm through. As you say, there's only one way to explain what happened. When you've found it out and done the right thing, I'll come back again."

The major let him ride off without a word, and then turned my way.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "so far you've seemed to be a pretty good hand at minding your own business. It will pay you to keep on, if you get what I mean."

"Yes, sir," says I, "but I'd like to ask one question. How did you know I was goin' to be held up?"

"Two of them planned it, and one of them got scared and told," answers the major. "We found out about it just a little before. As you were late, we knew that you would come this way. John cut through the fields to warn you. I waited at the edge of the brush. It's a pity I didn't reverse it."

He spoke so smooth and easy, that I decided to take a chance. Anyway he'd give me a kind of lead.

"I see, sir," says I, "but you're wrong about Mr. John. If you'll let me explain——"

The major stared at me a second. He was twistin' his quirt, and at first I thought he was goin' to lash out at me. If he'd done so it wouldn't have stung any more than his words.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "let me give you a piece of advice for your own good—for your own, personal good, sir. If you've decided to leave here, sign off in the regular way."

I was still lookin' after him when he made the edge of the field.

IV

MR. JOHN rode straight in to June Frère, the sheriff, and reported the robbery. Then he asked to be appointed a deputy to hunt down the thief. For a week there was a lot of ridin' round and searchin', but they never caught Bad-Eye. Most folks thought he'd took to the swamp.

The major offered a reward, and I tried

some detective work in the quarters, but it didn't get us anywhere. Our man had just naturally melted away.

When the searchin' played out, Mr. John kept on as deputy. The sheriff liked him, and it gave him a chance to keep goin' while he was lookin' round. I used to see him when I'd go in for the pay roll, and he always asked me about the place. He'd ask about the major too, but only how he was.

There was some things I wanted to say to Mr. John, but I never got to 'em. When it come to talkin' about the holdup, he was a good deal like his father. The first and only time I mentioned it, he broke me right off.

"All right, Nick," says he, "that's over and done with. Let's forget it from now on."

I was sure he knew that I understood. It was just that his pride wouldn't let him acknowledge the need of squarin' himself. I liked him as much as I missed him, which is sayin' a lot. Because once he'd gone, I had my hands full.

Right on the jump the major left me in entire charge of the field. I say "left" as he didn't come out with it in so many words. He'd ride round some and give me an order or so, but he never checked up afterward on what I'd done.

He was hit hard from the hour Mr. John rode off the place and for once he didn't take the trouble to hide his feelin's. Mostly he spent his days in the office and, from the way the lights burned at night in the library of the big house, it looked like he never went to bed. For all his hardheadedness I felt sorry for him. He was old and lonely, and the only comfort he could find was in his books and his bottle.

He sure went after the last item in his cold, quiet way. Jim, his house-servant, put it right when he says to me—

"Majuh done increase his dram."

Things rocked on like this through the Winter, with the major stayin' away more and more from the field. Then with the start of Spring plantin', he got a fresh grip on himself and begun to take notice again. Each day he got about more, till he was makin' his regular round.

When he'd been at it long enough to show he was back for keeps, I got all mixed up in my feelin's. One minute I was glad at havin' him round again. The next I was sorry to see him strike out fresh without Mr. John. It didn't look much like the two would get together now. I was mighty doubtful.

But you never could put your finger on the major. Just when things seemed at their worst, he made another move. It began one day when we was ridin' past a gang-plow that had been layin' out all year on a turnrow. The major pulled up and looked at it.

"Can you put that in shape?" he asks.

"Easy enough," I answers.

"All right. Start it tomorrow," says he; and he growls out a second later, "No need to let it rust to pieces. We're wasting enough money as it is."

I nearly fell off my horse, first because the major had explained himself, and second because that particular make of plow had been one of Mr. John's pet ideas. Next mornin' I had it out with our best team and driver and by the end of the week we was usin' two others that had been laid away, and the major was talkin' of orderin' more.

After this come other changes. The major went slow, but, once he'd tried a scheme of Mr. John's and found it worked, he stayed right with it.

Naturally I figured all this meant just one thing: The major was sorry and anxious to square things, and he was showin' it in the only way his pride would let him. Now was the time for me to speak up and explain, I told myself. So I watched for a chance, and one day, when we was discussin' a feed Mr. John had planned for the mules, I waded in.

"So it's goin all right?" asks the major.

"Mighty well," says I. "But there's one or two things about it I don't exactly understand. Now if we just had Mr. John back——"

I didn't get any further. The way the major swung on me made me want to dodge.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "you are getting absent-minded. I'll put it that way in view of your past services. But please remember one thing: As long as I am running this plantation, no man can disobey me and stay."

After this I threw up my hands. Mr. John had been right. You couldn't tell the major anything. And how was I to show him? I could only stand aside while the two dragged on as they was. It looked like the end to me.

But I'd forgot there was still a fourth

party to the business. Havin' started it, he come back to finish it, and the showin' begun.

V

IT WAS just at the start of hot weather—that slow, sleepy time when you feel like you want to lay out under a tree. Work bein' slack that Saturday, I'd knocked all the men off at noon, and had gone to the major's office to see about some repairs.

We worked for a while with the estimates, but I could see the old man's mind was on somethin' else. After a while he come out with it.

"There's trouble in town," says he, "that pay-roll thief of ours shot the sheriff this morning."

"Kill him?" I asks.

"He's not dead yet," says the major. "Frère got word the man had come back to see his family, and went after him alone in a grog-shop. No bravery in that. Just a foolish risk. Now there's talk of a lynching. At least that's the best I could make of it. Too much fuss on the telephone."

He talked quick and jerky, which was his sign of real worryin'. And afterward he got up and begun to pace round the room.

I knew what was on his mind. Mr. John had been made chief deputy. With June Frère out of it, he had the job of keepin' order on his hands. And the sheriff was just as popular as his cajun friends were excitable.

It was bad, but I wasn't goin' to stick my head out again. I only said: "Yes, sir," and waited for the major to make the next move.

What it would have been I don't know, because just then Silas, one of the teamsters, busted into the room. He forgot all about knockin', and his eyes looked as big as my fist.

"Majuh," says he, "Bad-Eye, he's down at the quarters. An' they's after him. We don't want no mob."

The major stopped his pacin' and thought a moment. Now that there was somethin' to do, he was perfectly cool again.

"I think I'll have him here," says he.

"Right," says I. "I'll go get him. No need for you to come, sir. Bad-Eye's just naturally yearnin' for some one to take him in charge."

Which was true enough, as I found out when I got to the quarters. I didn't have to go in after Bad-Eye. He come out to meet me, and he was the tamest killer I've ever seen. He was all over mud from where he'd doubled in through the swamp, and his skin showed kind of gray underneath. I'd seen folks scared, but none like him. He was clean crazy with fright.

"Save me, Mr. Nick! Save me!" he begged. "I didn't go for to do it. I was drinkin'. Don't let 'em git me! I didn't go for to do it!"

After we'd got him to the office he made for a corner, and hunched up, whimperin' and shakin', behind the safe. The major didn't waste but one look on him.

"Boy," he asks, "why did you come here?"

"I uster be your nigger," whines Bad-Eye. "I knowed you wouldn't let 'em git me."

"*Humh*," says the major. "Call up—er town, Mr. Wilson, and say we have him."

I knew what he meant by "town," but the best I could do was to send a message to Mr. John. Afterward I called up two or three places and tried for some news. There was a mob, all right. Led by a big, cajun loafer named "Lazie," it had begun by raidin' the grog-shops back of town and drinkin' all the liquor. This much I got straight.

The rest was the usual mix-up. The mob was now wreckin' the rest of St. Pierre. It had left on horseback to search outside. June Frère was dead. He was up and out again.

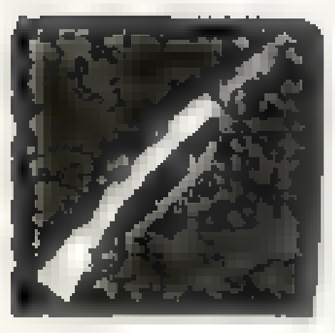
By the time I'd quit and rung off nearly an hour had gone.

All this time the major had been busy. There was a locker of Winchesters against the wall, and he'd hauled 'em out and loaded 'em as fast as he could shove in the shells. Trust Bad-Eye to know his white folks. He'd said the one thing to start the old man's fightin' pride.

"I got these rifles during the trouble with the Regulators," says he. "They came after one of my men then. I'll be pleased to have them try it again. Suppose you go now and clear the quarters, Mr. Wilson. Tell them all to get clean out. These mobs are seldom particular about the right man."

I'd hardly got back before we heard a horse racin' up from the rear. Grabbin' our rifles, the major and I went outside. A minute later Mr. John rode in alone.

VI



THERE wasn't any greetin's. We hadn't time, and I think we was all glad of it.

"Still got him?" asked Mr. John.

"In the office," answers the major. "It's the best place in case of trouble."

"There'll be trouble, all right," says Mr. John. "They got word and started before I did. They'd have beaten me if I hadn't taken the back way."

"How about June Frère?" I puts in.

"That's the tough part," goes on Mr. John. "He's only got a crease along the top of his skull that's knocked him out for a while. Of course he was all over blood, and the first cajun who got to him said, '*foutou*,' and went off to spread the news, I've been trying to get this to them all morning, but it isn't any use. They're too drunk and excited to listen to any one but Lazie."

"Got any deputies?" asks the major.

"No, sir," says Mr. John. "As fast as I swore them in they quit. I'm going this alone."

"Not exactly; not exactly," growls the major.

And he adds, Stark-like, a second later—

"That boy's looking to me to save him, and I will."

It was just about then that we heard a noise way out in front. The plantation road cut through the fields as straight as a string and, when we looked out along it, we saw the first riders turnin' in at the big gate.

We stood for a little and looked at 'em. There was somethin' kind of creepy in watchin' that mob ride in. They come some thirty strong with everything from a .22 to a duck gun and enough ropes to hang half the parish. Of course it wasn't much of a mob as mobs go. But they was drunk and mean, and they had us clean outnumbered. It looked like trouble to me.

The major snorted and begun to fiddle with his Winchester. He was always mighty particular about who come on his place.

"John," he growls, "this thing has gone far enough. I'm going out and order those people off. You let me settle this business."

"I'm sorry, sir," says Mr. John, "but it won't do. I've seen them from the start and I know. This is my job and there's only one way to handle it. Will you do what I say?"

He spoke mighty quiet, but there was somethin' about his words that bit in. The major didn't wait a second.

"Go ahead," says he, "I'm your man."

Mr. John went over to the office and stuck in his head.

"Bad-Eye," he calls, "they're coming. Lie low, no matter what they tell you. It's your only chance."

"Now, father," he goes on, "you and Nick go inside. Lock the door and back me up through the window. Don't shoot unless I shoot first. And, whatever happens, don't let them get Bad-Eye."

I could see that the major didn't like it. But he hadn't had his military trainin' for nothin! He snorted again and went in without a word.

The office was a solid little buildin' with a good heavy door. After we'd locked it and dragged up a tool chest, we was pretty snug.

There was only one window in front, and the major took the right-hand side. He was all hornet now, if you get what I mean. Even with their outnumberin' us, I don't know that I'd swapped places with that mob.

"Remember your orders, Mr. Wilson," says he. "Don't lose your head!"

We waited a while with our rifles out and ready for use. Then the first of the mob showed up on the big house drive.

VII

LAZIE, the leader, was in front and when he saw Mr. John he let out a yell. It passed down the line and was answered by a part of the bunch that had turned off toward the quarters. I could hear 'em lopin' back as Lazie trotted out on the lawn. He was one of these big, cajun bullies that they call a "Papa Man." Bein' a pot hunter, when he wasn't too busy loafin', he was carryin' his ten gage gun.

Mr. John stepped forward to meet him.

"Lazie," says he, "you're trespassing on private property. Take my advice and leave."

Lazie grinned in the slow, insultin' kind of way some big men have.

"That is all right, my friend," says he. "First give us the one who killed Junius Frère. Then we will go."

"I've told you that Frère isn't dead, that he's not badly hurt," says Mr. John, "and I'll tell you further that I have my prisoner and mean to protect him. Now you get! I'll give you one minute to start."

As he spoke he slipped out his gun.

Lazie didn't answer. He'd been lookin' at the office, and what he saw there had wiped the grin off his face. All at once he piled out of his saddle and started forward on foot.

"A moment," says he. "There is M'sieur the Major. I will speak to him first. After all it is his place."

It was the one thing we none of us expected. For a moment we was all off our guard. And that moment was enough. Before it was over Lazie had slipped past and behind Mr. John, out of his range. The next second he'd flashed round and planted the muzzle of his ten gage square in the middle of Mr. John's back.

He was smart, that cajun, as smart as he was quick. Before we knew what was happenin', he had Mr. John covered and was facin' his men. He didn't bother about us. He knew he had us too.

I caught all this with the back of my mind. Just then the main part of it was busy with somethin' else, somethin' I'd been waitin' and hopin' for for a mighty long time. It was my chance, and I took it on the run.

"Major," I mumbles, "I'm goin' to get that big cajun. Once he's out of it——"

Before I could get any further he had me by the wrist and was snortin' in my ear.

"You fool!" says he, "don't you know he'll pull that trigger? You can't kill him *quick enough*."

"All right," I comes back at him, "I just wanted to show you. That's the way Bad-Eye had me. That's why Mr. John didn't shoot. Bein' on the off side you couldn't see."

The major didn't say anything. But, from the way he looked at me, I knew I was only saved by our havin' more pressin' business on hand.

It was hard to stand there helpless. We could only watch for a chance while Lazie called on his men.

"Forward!" he yells. "We have them. Now is your time."

This was true, but those cajuns hesitated. They'd had time on their ride to cool down some, and perhaps they figured that lynchin' Bad-Eye and cleanin' out Auburn was too different things.

Anyway they hung back while Lazie cussed and raved till he went clean wild. In the end he lost his head complete, and started in to lead 'em himself.

"Cowards!" he screams, "follow me!"

And he swung round, wavin' his gun in the air.

The major and I pulled down on him, but it wasn't necessary. We'd only half sighted out rifles when Mr. John took a hand in the game. Up to then he'd stood frozen, which was all he could do. Now he hit as he whirled, puttin' everything he had into the blow.

It caught Lazie just behind the jaw and sent him staggerin' Before he could recover himself, Mr. John had piled into him and was slashin' him right and left.

Lazie threw his gun aside. Just then it wasn't any good to him. And when he took to his fists a second later, they wasn't much better. He had the size and strength, but Mr. John had the science. I'm here to say he made the most of it.

It was all over before it had begun real good. The first time Lazie went down he stayed there. And after his friends had picked him up, they forgot all about Bad-Eye and started back to town. There wasn't any more argument. That fight just naturally settled the business.

That's the way with most mobs, I reckon. Finish the leader, and they're done.

VIII

SO I DRAGGED back the chest and unlocked the door, and the major went out on the lawn. I wish I could say that he called out—"My son!" and grabbed Mr. John in his arms, but he wasn't built like that. He just stood for a while, watchin' the mob trail away, and when he finally spoke, it was to me.

"Mr. Wilson," he orders, "get your horse, and see that scum off this place. When the last one is in the parish road, lock the gate and report to me here."

I didn't hurry about it. He and Mr. John might have a lot to say to each other or again they might not. Whichever it was, I give 'em plenty of time. So when I showed up again it was near sundown, and Mr. John had put Bad-Eye in a buggy and gone out through the back.

The major was at his desk in the office and when I come in he picked up a slip of paper and swung round in his chair. If there was anything of the happy father about him, he sure hid it well.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "last fall I advised you not to meddle with my private affairs. Not long ago I advised you again. If you'll remember, I once told you that, as long as I was running this plantation, no man could disobey me and stay."

I managed to get out a "Yes, sir."

"Very well," says he, "here's your time."

I didn't try to say anything. I'd been warned, and it was comin' to me. And besides, now that things had turned out the way they had, I was perfectly willin' to go.

So I took the check and started out, and the major stopped me just as I got to the door.

"Oh, Mr. Wilson," he calls.

"Yes, sir," I answers.

"One thing more," says he. "My son, John, takes charge tomorrow and he's looking for an overseer. If you'll drop by in the morning, I've an idea that he'll sign you on."

FUR PIRACY IN THE PACIFIC

by William Byron Mowery

VASTY tomes have been written about pirates on the Spanish Main; but fiction and history are almost silent about the pirates of the North Pacific who "went in for" rich cargoes of Russian furs instead of Peruvian doubloons; who coursed the tempestuous Bering Sea in crazy open *shitikas*, which means boats sewed together for lack of iron; who had their rendezvous on the rocky wilds of such islands as Saghelien from which they could dash out and take the vessels that passed the Kurile reefs.

Largely these pirates were Siberian exiles who banded together, escaped to the coast and seized a ship. There is Count Benyovski, a Polish nobleman exile and sublime liar, who stole the documents accompanying ~~him to~~ his exile and rewrote them to his own satisfaction, with such good results that the Governor of Kamchatka made him his assistant. Later Benyovski killed this Governor Nilof, and for a time was actually despot of Kamchatka.

When things got too hot for him he laid hands on everything of value in the port of Bolsheretsk and sailed away in the *Sv. Petr i Sv. Pavel* to plunder a while among the Aleutians and then to sell his cargo in a Celestial Empire port.

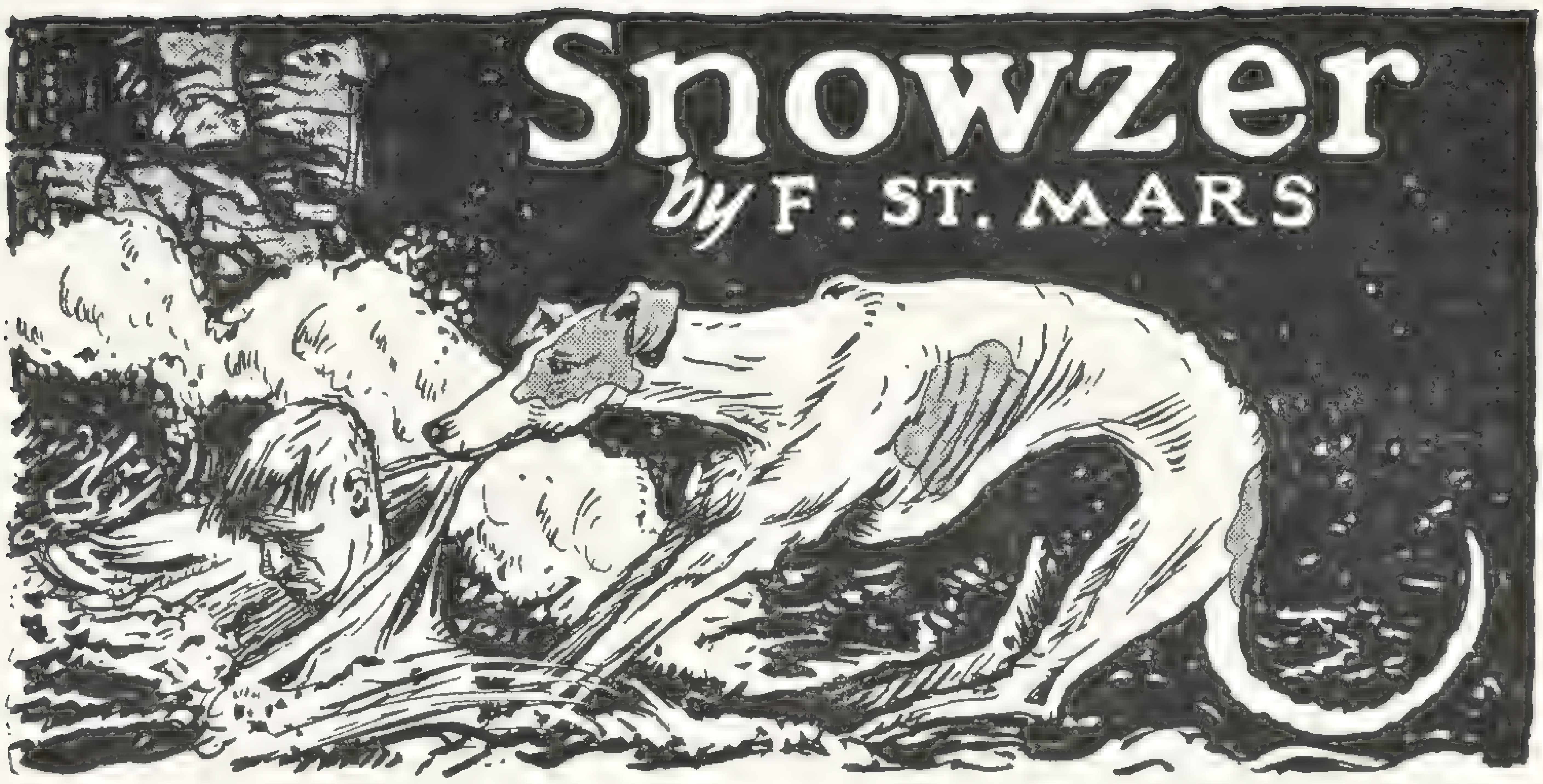
Items in his own inventory of the vessel are: "96 males, 9 of them females; 8 cannon, 2 howitzers, 2 mortars; 136 barrels of brandy; 126 cases of furs."

These exile pirates by no means had a monopoly on the fur thieving from 1760 to 1800. The Chinese lent a hand. The Chukchi, a savage tribe, lived on the Siberian coast just across Bering Straights from Alasha. They were so cruel and fearless—two pirates prerequisites—that not even the bands of Cossack *promyshleniki*—professional hunters—could penetrate their region.

These Chukchi played woe to the storm-shattered vessels that came in sight of their shores; and traveled long coastwise distances in their war canoes.

On their sea-otter and fur-seal hunting grounds a thousand miles beyond the last faint shadow of Imperial authority, the Russian fur traders themselves turned pirates against each other; for "God was high in his heaven and the Czar was far away." One shining example: Konovalof, a hired employee of the Lebedel company, for years plundered and murdered in Cook's Inlet and Kenai Bay; his booty was reckoned among the *earnings* of the company.

The fur piracy did not end until the tyrannical hand of Baranof, head of the Great Company for thirty years, crushed it out finally. From 1770 to 1790, *sixty percent* of the *promyshleniki* who went down to the Bering Sea in ships each year never returned from the voyage. Scurvy, shipwreck and the natives accounted for many; unchronicled piracy accounted for the rest.



Snowzer

by F. ST. MARS

Author of "The Raider," "Warden of the Herds," etc.

THE *Valhalla King* went down about ten minutes after she had struck, and Snowzer came up about ten seconds after she had gone down. He came up rather suddenly; there was a touch of the dramatic in Snowzer's reappearance. He had been sucked down into the after funnel, struggling no end. Then he had been blown up out of the after funnel, like a pea out of a tube, way up through yards of water into the air.

He described a neat curve above the seething smother of water, people, and wreckage, and landed with a splash well clear. Then he struck out for the shore. You couldn't see your hand before your face, but he headed for the shore; it may have been by chance.

Nobody thought about Snowzer. They were all too busy thinking about themselves. But Snowzer thought about himself. He was the sort of dog who would—self-absorbed, self-contained, self-taught mainly. Nothing ever seemed to surprize him, not even his hurtling reappearance from the black depths, and he never had anything to say. Therein lay his value and his peculiar virtue. He dealt in deeds, not remarks, and in his profession, in the trade where he came from, so to speak, any dog who did otherwise was soon, as Young Bill, his master, said, under the earth.

Snowzer had by a discreet attention to his own affairs so far avoided ending under the earth, and he was equally determined to avoid ending under the sea. But it was a —— and a half of a proposition.

He had never been at sea before, in any sense, I think, and registered a mental determination—if his clean, neat paws ever touched solid earth—never to go again. The waves bothered him—he could not make them out—blinded, buffeted, half choked him. When he wasn't swallowing sea, he was doing his best to unswallow it. It tasted vile, and he would have been sick as a precautionary measure against possible poisoning, learned in a hard school, if he had not been too busy swimming.

The funnel had been kind in shooting him clear of the maelstrom turmoil of the wreck. He could hear it now. It was not a pretty noise—a long, sobbing wail, that rose, hung, and sunk in the darkness upon the face of the waters. It was the last protest of men and women and little children against—but never mind.

And Snowzer swam on. He was the sort of dog who would, till doomsday. His grandparent bulldog would have done the same thing. None of your Kismet lay, or surrender touch for him, thank you. Nor was he a candidate for a foam pillow. He swam like a merman; and he landed, not gracefully, head over heels, and with not the faintest idea what was supposed to be happening on the upflung insolent shoulder of a forty-foot breaker, in a white and phosphorescent boiling smother of whipped foam.

Snowzer rolled over three times and up on to his legs, and bounded three yards clear from the hissing, pounding race of the next breaker, which seemed to want him badly. The rest was scrambling, sliding, slipping, scratching, scraping, slithering, over wet rocks covered with rotten sea-weed. Then through still pools, where one lobster and one octopus tried to persuade him to stay, and the octopus got the tip of one tentative tentacle snapped cleanly off for its horrible pains.

And so through and over, mostly flying over, gray mud sucky as the "fat ooze" of Letter's Wharf, and quicksand which, like lobster and octopus, would fain have made him stay. Then, farther up, over a white and driven strand of shells mashed finer than salt and as white, to a cliff path, steep as a roof and steeped in misty, driven spray, where seafoam drenched his short, stiff, brindled coat, and his feet sank in byssus and thrift as it were a costly carpet.

Soon he was out on to the velvety springy turf of the overhanging upper-cliff, far above the tremendous trample of the waves, where his nose smelled the cocoanut paste of gorse and the soft hint of heather, and the clean, fresh, salt-laden sou' wester went romping inland with a rushing song.

Snowzer had shaken himself twice as he walked, so to speak, over that wonderful shell strand, but he had not stopped to really address himself to the task of getting dry till now. Now, however, he properly shook, and nearly shook himself over the edge of the cliff, so that he removed swiftly fifty yards back on to the moor and there rolled and scrubbed, and scraped, and shook, and scratched.

DOGS appear to be able to see in the dark quite well enough to carry on with, although cats have for some reason grabbed for themselves the reputation, as if they owned sole patent rights to it; and Snowzer seemed to have no difficulty, as he stood, wolfish, lean and furtive, on the top of the cliff, in getting the hang of his surroundings.

Snowzer, be it known, was what ordinary people call a gipsy mongrel, dog fanciers term a lurcher, and the fraternity, from whose rough bosom he came, a "long dog." Long dog, by the way, having nothing at all or soever to do with that other long—not "long"—dog, the dachshund. He was not long that way, but upwards, in the leg. In other words he was a greyhound all but, the all but being represented by one of his grandparents who had been a bulldog.

Snowzer's first impression of this, to him, new world of great adventure must have been that he was in the menagerie whose tents, pitched on the edge of town, he had furtively peered into and smelled round when little more than a pup.

As he set to, with his springy long walk, that looked as if he had little springs under the pad of each neat foot, as he set to, I say, and searched alongshore for Young Bill — a lifelong habit, I guess, learned by the aid of many kicks — he came first upon a long, low, gray, bear-like smudge that turned into a beast with many grunts and a badly eroded temper; next upon a red form, smelling abominably, and yapping like a lost terrier with a bad cold, and lastly, wet and glistening, but hauled up all nice and dry above the pulverising waves, a six foot, blotchy, torpedo-shaped, bloated mass that roared at him hoarsely between jaws full of perfectly atrocious teeth.

Snowzer did not know that in one round he had come upon the old man badger and the rusty cuss fox of the upper, and the great gray seal of the lower cliff. He only knew that, for the first time in his life, without receiving orders to await return, he could not find Young Bill—whom many fourth rate prize rings allowed was quite nifty with his mitts—and that, failing to find Young Bill, and without any visible means to date of ever so doing, he, Snowzer, was thrown upon his own resources. And Snowzer cast adrift from the fleet, so to say, and maneuvering upon his own was some dog, I want to tell you—he was not just a mere poodle.

His first effort was to deliver a silent deadly streaking ultimatum upon the great father of gray seals. Failing to produce any visible effect beyond clashing teeth, twenty stinks of twenty kinds of fish, and not quite twenty hoarse and repelling roars from that huge, bloated bulk of a beast, he sought the fox, and the fox, with Snowzer in swift silence reaching for his brush tip, sought the background in one doubling race.

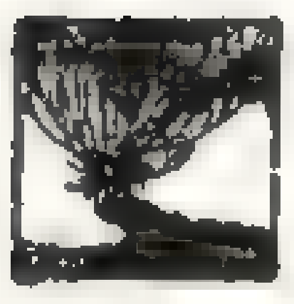
Finally he interviewed friend badger, but though he finally induced that sour tempered patriarch to seek the depths of his cavernous abode, he came away with a quite lively respect for badgers as a class, and with a red gash on his flank that represented

"Brock's" universally accepted trade mark.

Snowzer felt more happy after that. It wasn't the sort of thing, the ten-mile-out-of town, back-garden-pig-stye-market-garden-fenced-coppice-full-of-tame-reared-pheasants sort of business he had been used to, but it was exhilarating. It stretched his long legs, breathed his deep lungs, and warmed him up. He felt that life without Young Bill, the lightweight, might after all be just, if only just, bearable.

He had one last loping look along shore for the aforesaid pug-nosed Young Bill, or his cap, or his belt—especially his belt—and then hied him inland to the abodes of men. And that, many will say, is just like a dog. Can't last alone in the wild without starving; must have man. Different than cats.

But wait. Snowzer's business with the abodes of men was strictly of a nocturnal and professional character. He did not, except for the slum home of Young Bill, enter 'em, and he did not enter that very much even. He may have been, and was, one top-hole house dog, but not a housy dog. He preferred God's fresh air, though for the first time in his life he was really breathing it quite free of soot and factory fumes.



SNOWZER may have felt surprize that he covered five miles before he struck a house—a whitewashed little farm perched on the middle of a mighty slope. He had never before been half-a-mile from any house.

One rigid nose inspection from behind the hedge of the kitchen-garden told him all he wanted to know, and through a fowl-made gap he entered in. In the black intervals, when racing clouds put out the moon, he got the hang of the place—marked hutches full of what Young Bill called "drummers," and more ordinary people rabbits, examined a shed full of "red un's," according to Young Bill, but fowls according to us, and located one big black retriever, attached to one kennel by one chain. There was no guarantee that he might keep so attached, truly, but Snowzer did not worry over him. Snowzer had dealt, always in the way o' business and circumspectly of course, with dogs on chains before. More than once he had stepped over the chain without waking the dog. He was an expert among experts and his finesse at this game was superb.

He moved, and nobody would have sworn that it was not a cloud-shadow sliding among the cabbage-stumps. A dark period followed, and there was the very faintest of faint sounds in the region of the rabbit-hutches. That sound was the stifled death-squeal of a rabbit; and when, half a minute later, the moon cascaded down it just revealed the tip of Snowzer's whippy tail slithering through the hedge, and Snowzer had a drummer in his long lean jaws.

Snowzer shifted as these long dogs alone can, almost unnoticeably and almost, it seemed, without touching the ground, down three hedges, stopped, deposited his rabbit under a clawey brier bush in a ditch, and fleeted back to the garden again.

Heaven knows, however, how he got into the fowl house and silently, but he did. Only one fowl heard him, a cockerel, a red un. He opened his beak to complain, and—kept it open for good. With one leap—again I cannot say how the dog could see—Snowzer had him by the throat, strangling all sound.

Snowzer left the fowl house with no more noise than an owl leaving a barn, and negotiated garden and hedge all in one streaky glide. The cockerel went with him.

A momentary passing patter down ditches, a flash of something in the dark over gateways, and once the green glass illumined brain-windows as his eyes turned sideways, was all there was to be seen or heard of Snowzer before, almost before you could realize it, he was standing again beside the dead rabbit.

And the big, black retriever slept on; but the farm cat returning from some most illegitimate business in the poaching line did not sleep. She was examining the dead rabbit under the brier-bush when Snowzer arrived like a spent shell. Then she was a flame-eyed, spitting, sparking, sizzling, swearing apparition going down that hedge like several furies; that is, after she had picked herself up from the double somersault that Snowzer's fangs had shocked her into.

Snowzer, however, was fetched up all standing. He had, in fact, arrived at an *impasse*. He was, that is, up against the wild, and was at a loss how to act, He took up the drummer and looked round, dropped it, and repeated the evolution with the red un. His eyes were wide and troubled. He seemed perplexed, stuck on a dead center. And for why? Simply he had no Young Bill to take 'em to. That indeed had been his job, his profession, to slay things and take them to Young Bill, saying nothing in the process, taking jolly good care that the things said nothing, and expecting Young Bill to say nothing, or next to nothing, in return

Now there was no Bill. The thought sort of straightened Snowzer up where he stood. There was only Snowzer, and that straightened him up still more. He was up against the wild, and must fend for himself, or—die. Man, he guessed, or at any rate the man of those parts, would not cherish him after the affair of the little white farm.

Then Snowzer ate the rabbit, cleanly and swiftly. A passing fox stopped to hear the bones crack in the darkness, and later got the fowl which the lurcher had slain from habit, for Young Bill.

AND then Snowzer removed into the night. I do not think he had any distinct idea where he wanted to remove to, or what he wanted to do when he got there.

The moon showed him trotting along a sheep path through the heather, head down, tail down, thin as a rake, wasp-waisted, hazel-wand-legged, spring-footed, long-jawed, grinning his everlasting grin from ear to ear as if he were perpetually laughing silently up his sleeve.

Suddenly in a hollow, full of the more delicate cross-leaved heath and of cottony rushes, he stopped—stopped so utterly instantly that his right foot remained suspended in the air.

A pool was in front of him at the base of the hollow, like a big round looking-glass laid flat, and the moon was reflected full in the middle of the pool. And the pool was broken by ripples. That was the rub. No wind would reach the water in that sheltered hollow. Nor could anything be heard at first. Then it could—a faint splash, as if something were walking in the shallows..

Snowzer's experience of the wild up to that date was limited, limited to as far out of town and back as Young Bill could take him in one night. Therefore he started a bit when he saw wading out into that silver pool a beast about as big as himself, but daintier, with legs like hazel wands as his were, eyes like stars on a summer's eve, and the grace unsurpassed, the superb proud carriage of a deer and of nothing else. It was, in fact, a roebuck, smallest of that great clan, but by no means least.

Next instant the buck whipped round where he stood up to his knees in the silver pool. Snowzer could see his silky wet muzzle uplifted to the airs, and Snowzer may or may not have known that there were back eddies of wind in that hollow which the roebuck's keen nose was sifting.

For a moment he waited there, a picture of elegance personified in that magic scene, then pranced up the opposite bank as gay as a lamb on a spring morn, and five hundred times as graceful.

There was no hint or glimpse of fear about him. He just went up into the air, all four feet together, landing and rebounding again as if he were on a spring-board, clean up, straight up, for all the world as if he were in idle play, and, being alone, must, from sheer exuberance of spirits, needs gambol with his own bounding shadow. But his last leap took him into the tangled heath, and when Snowzer arrived—he took the pool flying, I think—the roebuck was not there.

Snowzer's curiosity was aroused, and he turned to on his lightning trailing act which hitherto had been guaranteed to run any game to earth, or death, or into the open inside of four minutes. It certainly turned out of that hollow a good many more creatures than one would ever have suspected of being there, including four rabbits; one fox; two stoats, swearing; one polecat, gibbering; one long-eared owl, who barked, and seven snipe; but the one thing it was meant to turn out, the roebuck, it did not even so much as reveal one horn or hoof of. That roebuck was, and he was not; nor could even Snowzer's startling tactics reveal him.

And Snowzer at the end stood panting and unpleased.

This was his first wrestle with the real wild, and he had taken a tumble. Moreover, he began to suspect that the roebuck had been aware of his presence all the time, and was from the first laughing at him. This galled him, for he was no lap dog to look upon, and the little deer ought to have been terrified; but he did not know the roe deer, who, as few are aware, is unlike all other deer, and a mischievous elf of the waste.

The wolf, however, persists in every dog, and in that short four minutes Snowzer had forgotten many things his master had taught him, and remembered many other things called instinct, which he never knew he knew. And Snowzer really laid himself out to hunt then.

Now the hunting of Snowzer was like the hunting of no other dog I know. Most of them run by sight, *or* scent; Snowzer tore at racehorse speed by sight *and* scent. His grandfather bulldog gave him the scent, a point most people overlook, and his greyhound parents gave him his sight and speed.

MY! BUT that was some hunt. You picture Snowzer always flying along over the heather, now checking, now twisting, now sliding, this way, now streaking that, now leaping a boulder or, aye, even the fallen pillar of an ancient dolmen, now unraveling one maze at top speed which the genius of the little buck had set him, now picking out with whirling pounces nine great leaps with barely a kiss of the ground between each, which that elfin buck had left for him to puzzle out.

Now he was doing one straight flash of a mile, only to find that the cunning roe had come back on his own trail for the half of it, and gone off at a tangent. And now sitting sliding on his tail in a bog that looked firm grass, and leaping twistingly sidewise with one mighty wrench to save his carcass from certain death. Across these boggy patches the roebuck had pranced dainty and unflustered, light and magical as if he were indeed the fairy thing he pretended to be, and then—Snouts and tail-tips! That was the limit.

Snowzer had not stopped short merely. He could not have done that at the speed he was going over the springy turf just then. He threw himself backward, and landed his head with a thud on the ground *behind* where his tail should be. It was the greatest muscular effort he had ever made in his lifetime, and he felt as if he had strained every sinew in his body, but it had saved his life.

Exactly beneath his feet the sheer drop of four hundred feet of the cliff's terrible face had suddenly yawned without warning. And the roebuck? Had he fallen over and dashed himself to crab-feed on the cliffs below? Nay, but I should worry. He had merely skipped lightly down to a giddy ledge four inches wide and skipped back again a little farther up. That was what *he* had done. Snowzer could do as he liked, and Snowzer did, just. Nearly he had done what he did not like.

After that hunting roebucks as a sport rather palled upon Snowzer, especially as he seemed no nearer getting on terms with the little fairy beggar of a buck than when he had started. Evidently roebucks did not mind being hunted. They appeared rather to like it. At any rate, I think he had a pretty shrewd idea in his intelligent long cranium that this buck had known perfectly well what he was up to from the word "go," and had simply been playing with him all along. Which, by the way, is the peculiar sporting way with roebucks, and their great charm—one of their charms.

Snowzer was just turning from staring gloomily over the cliff's edge into the nothing that was there, with that complete freedom from giddiness which is peculiar to all the wild folk, when, from it seemed far away, borne upon the wind, cutting through the din of the surf, faintly, so faintly that I swear no human ear could have heard it, Snowzer heard a whistle that shot him stiff as if he had been galvanized.

One — two — three — four — five — six seven—eight—nine—nine seconds passed. Ten—eleven—twe—ah! The whistle came again, and this time there was no mistake for Snowzer. For him, I say, and only for him out of all the living creatures in the wide, wide world. His ears were like a wireless receiver trained to accept from only one sender, and they had received their call, clear and true through the tail end of the night now. It was an S. O. S.

I LIKE to think of Snowzer's action. It was so typical of the beast's whole life — that self-controlled, self-centered, self-absorbed dog who rejected all friendships save one.

Snowzer let himself go along the cliff-top with a single shooting bound that carried him yards, and with a trembling, almost sobbing whine, which was the only sound I ever heard him make save once a growl. And from that moment he became not so much a dog at all, as a vibrating, curving streak, a projectile hurled with inconceivable velocity through the night; a something

—none could swear what—come and gone before you could blink, a drumming, hurtling dark blur, shooting through and over everything in its path.

The way he threaded a heather brake was one marvel, but the manner in which he took the cliff path down to the sea was hair-raising, and a greater miracle. At no moment could one have said that one saw him. He became rather an impression. I suppose his wonderful clean hard feet touched the ground, they never seemed to, and I swear he flew most of the cliff path like a bird. The greatest miracle of all was that he arrived in one piece at the bottom of it. Speed? W-e-l-l, say, he had put up some wind-beating records in his lifetime, but this straight streak—*whrrrsh*—was the biggest ever.

Snowzer arrived in the spray and spotless boiling spume smother at the edge of the waves about a quarter of a mile away, like a bursting twelve-inch shell.

There was something dark rolling about in the dazzling, hissing turmoil there, and *it whistled*. That was all it could do—whistle! It was practically insensible, still it whistled. Its last brain message had been to whistle. And it whistled for Snowzer, one peculiar kind of whistle, the only whistle under heaven that Snowzer had ever been known to answer.

Snowzer said nothing. He grabbed that long dark thing, that rolled about in the dazzling, seething surf, by the scruff of its collar, and he tugged. Jove! how that canine four-legged thing tugged and tugged backward and backward, inch by gasping inch, helped by the foaming lip of each wave—up the beach, gradually, gradually, gradually, and unconsciously helped by the body itself.

At last Snowzer could do no more, and collapsed, sobbing. It seemed as if his heart would burst. But after a time, he crawled to the shape and began to lick—at its face! It was the body of a man.

Many minutes passed before anything happened after that, and then the man opened his eyes, and instantly his eyes were open he started whistling, but the whistle was licked out of his mouth by a hot tongue, and the man sat up with a jerk.

"——'s truth!" he almost shouted. "*It's Snowzer!*"

Snowzer said nothing, but nearly had wriggling hysterics of joy. He could not speak, and he was always a dumb dog, anyhow, but if he could have spoken, he might have barked—

"Bless my whiskers and fangs! It's Young Bill."

It was.

A hare going over the moor knew it just before dawn, for he passed, killed at goodness knows how many miles an hour, by way of Snowzer's jaws to Young Bill's capacious pocket. A partridge asleep with his family passed, also via Snowzer's jaws, straight from deep slumber into oblivion, and that same pocket. And the roedeer in the beechwood, it was, who saw the fire lighted in the hollow tree, wherein Young Bill snuggled naked while his clothes dried, and the hare and the partridge together sizzled on sticks—good fare for man and beast, and man and beast, crouched side by side, ate 'em, washed down with crystal mountain stream water which bubbled close by, and, for Young Bill only, with a quatern o' brandy from a flask.

The rising sun found a fully dressed man and a dog sound asleep in a warm bracken couch, as if nothing had happened. They were quite happy, those two. They had found each other and themselves.

The Homesteaders

A Five-Part Story Part III

by HUGH PENDEXTER

Author of "Iroquois! Iroquois!", "Rifle Rule," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

ALONZO FALL and his wife with their children, Murray and Alice, started homesteading in Blue Earth County, Minn., in the Autumn of 1859, that then being the jumping-off place. Their neighbors—each two or three miles away—were the Cray family and old Peter Clush, the latter a retired army man. Out of the tall wild grass came "Mad Martha," whose parents had been murdered by Indians near Sauk Center on the old Red River Trail nearly a score of years back. Her great problem in life was to learn whether the murderers were Sioux or Chippewas. The bow and quiver of arrows that she carried indicated what she would do when she found out. The Indians feared her as being both "mad" and as being a medicine woman.

Other friends were Papa Baptiste, who avoided Mad Martha; also "Codfish" Billings and old man Pollacker with his hard-drinking sons, Bert and Ed. The Pollackers were suspected of selling whisky to the Indians.

In the spring of sixty-one there was more excitement locally over finding the body of a murdered white stranger than there was over the fall of Fort Sumter. Martha asserted, "No Injun did it."

A year later old man Pollacker was so badly gored by his bull that he died. Murray Fall set out to kill the brute. When he came up to it he saw it pursuing a blanket Indian. Before he could shoot, three white horsemen appeared, firing at the Indian. Murray shot at the bull, which whirled on the three pursuers, thereby giving the Indian a chance to escape. As he passed he tossed the white youth a medicine crowskin. By the skunkskins wrapped around both wrists Murray recognized him as Little Crow, a chief of the Mdewakanton Sioux. Murray pinned the crowskin to his shirt.

The other three whites killed the bull, though one of them, a man named Bisen, was wounded in the affray. The other two, whom Murray heard called "Archie" and "Mart," explained that the Indian had tried to steal their horses.

The Falls took Bisen into their home till he got well. Two days after he left, a posse drew up and announced that they were after Bisen and his pals for horse-thievery.

"SHANTY MOSE" worked for the Crays, and Abner Page was the Falls' hired man. They were always at swords' points, for each was a tall talker, Mose's specialty being bragging about the days when he was a great man in the lumber camps, while Page got colorful over his experience in former years as a pilot on the St. Croix and the Mississippi. Phil White, the Pollackers' hired man, had nothing much to say.

"Blue Earth country is a mighty good place to come," Mose remarked of Page, "*if he wants to hide.*"

ON THE pretext that he wanted to get a job from Joseph DeCamp, who ran the sawmill at the Redwood, or lower agency, Fall took his family on a semi-vacation trip to the reservation, leaving his wife and daughter boarding at New Ulm ~~on the~~ way. Arriving at the mill, they found that DeCamp had gone to the upper agency, thirty miles farther along, to help the Indians spend the summer gold which the Government gave them in return for the cession of certain lands. Fall gravely decided to continue his make-believe errand thither.

On the way a negro named Godfrey who had thrown in with the Indians tried to rob Murray of his rifle. Murray was protected by Little Crow, who saw the medicine crowskin he had given the white youth.

When the party reached the upper agency they found the Indians wrathy because the summer money had not arrived. However, they soon had something new to think about, for some white men had run off Little Crow's ponies from his village on the Redwood. A posse of civilian volunteers was made up to recover the stock and thus prove the white man's good faith. The party consisted of

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"The Homesteaders," copyright, 1924, by Hugh Pendexter.

Clush, Page, Murray and two others. As they set out Mr. Fall with many misgivings started back for New Ulm without remembering to complete his "errand" of finding DeCamp.

The posse had not gone far before they saw a man wrapped in a green blanket dash by on horseback

"Sioux don't wear green blankets except when the're dead," remarked Clush.

A little later they found a murdered Indian with the neck of an empty whisky bottle tied to his left wrist.

"There you have it!" cried Page. "White man robbed an Indian burial scaffold of a green blanket. He took it because it was new. Then he rode down here and murdered a blanket Indian who'd stolen a bottle of whisky from his whisky-cart. We'll follow that cart trail and find the man who did the killing. It won't take us away from chasing horse thieves as it leads south."

Soon the wheel tracks gave evidence that the wagon had been unloaded. Indications pointed to the conclusion that the load of whisky had been cached in a near-by burial scaffold of the Sioux—a safe hiding place, inasmuch as whites seldom passed near them, while the Indians kept strictly away.

"Whisky can't run away," Clush reminded them. "More to the point to find the men who left it there." So the posse pressed on without investigating further

Just as they made camp that night Page announced that he'd "take a ride." In the middle of the prairie he was caught by a storm which forced him to take shelter in a sod hut, where he met a suspicious character calling himself Martin. On the pretext of getting him a drink, Martin caught Page off his guard, knocked him senseless and set fire to the hut. When he came to he was surrounded by his friends and Martin was gone.

"Feller with the green blanket did it," Page announced. "I found the blanket while he went out to the horse hovel for the whisky."

After giving Page a couple of days to recuperate they rode on to the little settlement of Fairmount. Here Murray was introduced by Clush to "Miss 'Lizabeth, Edgar Potter's gal. Mighty likely young woman too."

"In another month I'm going to visit Mattie Williams, who's coming to see her uncle, J. B. Reynolds," she told him. "The Reynoldses live near the lower agency. It doesn't seem as if the time would ever come."

In the middle of the night one Oaks with two companions came to town leading a string of horses destined for the Union army. When they tried to run off the posse's horses Page shot at them and brought one man down. To his horror he heard the fallen man scream.

"Good God! You wouldn't shoot me, Mart?"

A downward shot from the saddle and two men were galloping on, leaving a dead man behind them.

"The murdering ——!" gasped Page. "Did it to keep him from blabbing."

Oaks and his companion got away, but were forced to leave the horses. Of these nine were recognized as horses stolen from Jackson men, and ten as ponies the Indians had lost. The posse's search was over.

When the dead man was buried, he was covered with a green blanket Oaks had given the Potter girl the day before.

"Oaks' real name must be Mart," commented Page.

"That's the name of one of the three men who were chasing Little Crow when Pollacker's bull was killed and the man called Bisen was hurt," added Murray.

Page felt his head and grimly remarked:

"Not only a horse thief but also mixed up in smuggling rum on the reservation. He hustled the stolen ponies down Jackson way while his friends were getting rid of the cart and whisky."

THE trader Robinson Jones gave Mad Martha a cameo of her mother which he had received in trade for a bottle of whisky from an Indian named Man Who Crawls. In return she promised to find the Indian Brown Wing and demand from him the return of a gun which Jones had lent him. She trailed Man Who Crawls and found him boasting drunkenly of the killing of her parents, years before. When she left him he was dead with one arrow in the side and another through the throat. But before she killed him she learned that the only other survivor of the band of assassins was an Indian named One Ear.

The death of Man Who Crawls was attributed to the Chippewas, and his village held a dance against them. The dance was led by One Ear. It was at its climax, while he was facing the bush growth, both hands held high and head thrown back, his mouth gaping to sound the war cry, that a feathered arrow struck him below the left nipple and split his heart

CHAPTER VI

THE COST OF BROWN WING'S HUNTING

MISS MARTHA carried no bow and arrows as she left the ferry at the lower agency and rode north. She missed the quiver on her shoulder and the arrows in her boot, and without realizing it she felt for both several times within the first few miles.

It was her last trip up the Pembina trail, she had told her agency friends; but she did not explain that her only purpose was to visit the spot where her parents had been killed. She knew she was going away from Minnesota very soon. Just whither she would ride, except that it would be to the south and for a long distance, she had no idea. Her work in Minnesota was ended, and had it not been for the irresistible call of the northern trail she would have made for the Iowa line directly after One Ear died.

She had no fear of the Sioux. There was not an Indian in the whole State who did not know by this time how she had killed two Wahpekute men. But they also knew why she killed and felt no ill will. The score was even. She had taken the red man's way of covering the bones of her dead; she had asked for no help from other whites. It had been a blood feud. Little Crow had told the Mdewakanton men that the medicine woman had done as a red man would do. The hand of a strong spirit had touched her head. She was as free to come and go in their villages as ever.

But it was with great relief that the Sioux men realized she would seek no more victims. No Indian would talk to the whites about the two killings, even to admit there had been any. Among themselves they praised One Ear's bravery in knowingly going to his death. He had done great honor to his band.

Twenty miles from the river Miss Martha came upon a camp-fire at sundown. She approached it, thinking it to be a red hunter's camp. Her brows lifted in faint surprize as she beheld Papa Baptiste and Shanty Mose. The latter greeted her affably. Baptiste bowed low and began edging away, his quick gaze darting to the blanket roll.

Martha dismounted and told him in the Santee dialect:

"I carry no bow and arrows. I look no more for Dakota or Chippewa. Stay by your fire, my friend, or I will go into the woods and camp alone."

"*M'm'selle* is most polite," muttered Baptiste with another low inclination. "But she may forget there is a bit of Chippewa on my grandmother's side."

He spoke in English; she replied in the dialect:

"All Chippewas are my friends. All Dakotas are my friends now. They say two Wahpekute men died by arrows. They say Man Who Crawls and One Ear have gone among the ghosts for what they did when I was a little child."

"Name of a saint! You traced them down, *m'm'selle?* You followed back path through all the years? *Nom de Dieu!* But there have been many times when old Baptiste was afraid *m'm'selle* would make a mistake."

"You knew and did not tell me," she gently upbraided him.

"*Mais oui.* But what would *m'm'selle* have? Papa Baptiste is an old man. He lives many years by holding his tongue. If the Dakota think he told *m'm'selle* his hair would be in the smoke." Then with a little shiver:

"Even now the Dakota may think that. They know I knew."

"Chetan Wakan Mani has heard my talk," she rapidly assured him in dialect. "He knows a bottle of whisky told me. He says my medicine told me. It is all the same. Now I know you brought me away in your cart and saved me from the wolves. You will not run and hide again when the white medicine woman comes along."

"Alas, *m'm'selle!* All so sad. It was dark. Wolves were following each side of the trail. Papa did not fear them. When they can not run down game, yes; but not when the ground is bare. There comes the little cry of a child. Ah, that was very bad. Many times when I am awake in the woods I have heard it. All so sad. Now I will stay by the fire and cook and we will talk of tomorrow."

"Why in Tophet can't you both jabber so's I can understand?" peevishly complained Mose. "I've heard enough Injun talk to last me a lifetime. Got enough of it at Taylor's Falls when the Chippewas would sneak down to tackle the Sioux. Got enough when the Winnebagoes would visit the camp and the squaws would wet their fingers and pinch out the candles and steal all the pork off the table before we could get lighted again. And always more'n enough from the Sioux. Made up my mind I'd never have anything to do with their cussed lingo."

"The Sioux would call you the Tall Talker," Martha gravely informed him. "If you don't like the Sioux why are you up here on the edge of their hunting grounds?" As she questioned him she opened her blanket roll and produced a large package of cooked meat and bread brought from Dickinson's boarding house. "You were working for the Crays? Why did you leave them?"

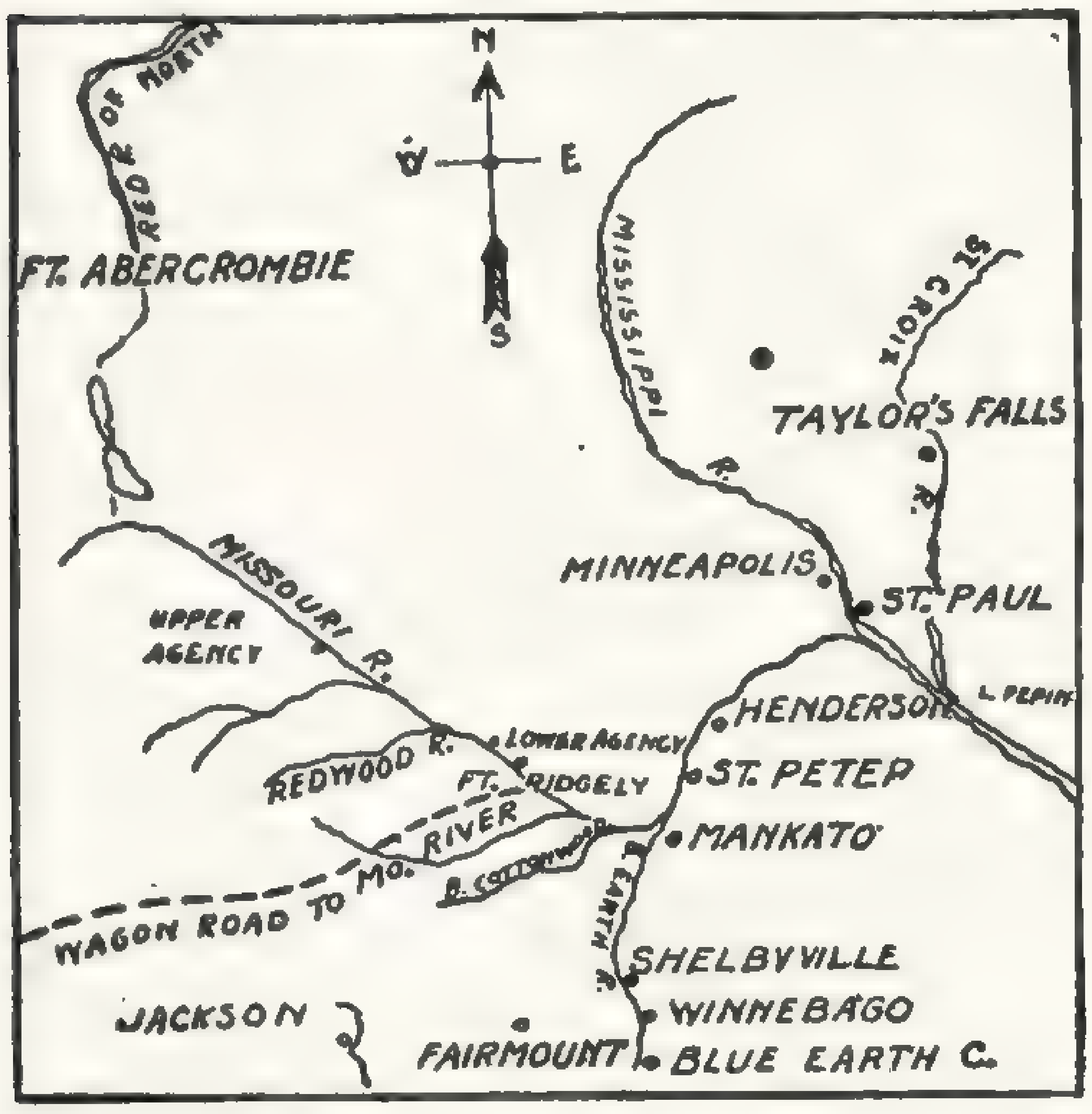
Mose's face was gloomy as he tugged his side whiskers and explained:

"Crays were all right. I like them a heap. But I couldn't stand that mouthy Abner Page over to Fall's. Every time I tried to talk he'd open his yap and just the same as call me a liar. And I don't like open grass country anyway.

"Baptiste is taking me to Robinson Jones' place up in Acton Township. He thinks I can get work there. It's a good timber country and small chance of me being pestered by darned fools like that Page feller. Where you bound for, Miss Martha?"

"Oh, just up north a ways. Then I'm going far away from here."

"M'sieur Mose is afoot. We go slow. But if *m'm'selle* is not in the hurry we can travel together," eagerly suggested Baptiste.



He was finding it very pleasant to realize he had no further need to fear the eccentric. Throughout the years he had had a certain fondness for her because of having saved her. Yet never had he dared to tell her of how his squeaking Red River cart had taken him to a child delirious with fear because of the terrible scenes she had witnessed, and because of the green eyes of the wolves moving about the dread spot. He wished to prolong the unusual experience of enjoying her company. Before she could make any reply he was timidly adding:

"We would leave M'sieur Mose with the trader; then travel on together. Papa thinks he knows where *m'm'selle's* trail will end. He would go with her. And, *m'm'selle,* those two poor ones! That night when I found you and gave you food and water! I bury the poor ones. Very deep. I left a fire burning over them. They were not found by the —— wolves. I say these things of yesterday so *m'm'selle* will understand."

"You were good to me and the poor ones, Papa Baptiste," she quietly said; but her quick gesture to reach forward and pat his withered brown hand was eloquent.

"*Bon!* We travel together," he cried. "All is well with them. It is such a short trail from the first sun to the last sun one should not think too much when a trail ends too quick. It is all the same after a few years."

Then to Shanty Mose he said:

"*M'm'selle* knows every one up north. She knows the trader. She speaks a good word for *m'sieur.*"

"Then I declare to goodness, Miss Martha, I'll be mighty keen to have your company as far as the Jones place," declared Mose.

With a touch of his old boasting manner he quickly added:

"Not that I can't do my own dickering with anybody and without help from anybody. There was the time when we had a logging camp on the little pond where Rum River heads; where they cut the timber for Fort Snelling even before I come to this country.

"I was some punkins then, I'll tell you. Didn't need to have any one speak a good word for me. Just lammed in and showed 'em what I could do. In those days it was 'If Mose says so you're all right,' or, 'If Mose will speak a good word for you.' Yes, sir! That's what folks would say from Mille Lac to St. Paul."

Martha smiled slightly and promised:

"I know the Jones and Baker families. I will say you worked for Mr. Cray, that he spoke well of you. Mr. Jones will give you work, I am quite sure. It will be the Sabbath when we reach there. We should find the two families together. How are the Falls and the Pollacker boys?"

"Young Fall will soon be at the lower agency if his plans go through. Got his folks to let him visit up there. Knows some young people, I take it. Don't know nothing about the Pollackers. They drink too much. And I guess that ain't the worst——"

"Stop!" she cried, her eyes opening wide and causing Papa Baptiste to duck back instinctively. "They are my friends. I like them. If you must speak bad of any one, take some one Martha doesn't know."

Mose was not abashed by this rebuke, but admiringly appealed to Baptiste, crying:

"What I always said, Baptiste! Loyalty is the greatest thing in the world. You hear her? She's loyal. My friends always said:

" 'Mose is loyal. Maybe he has his faults, but if he has they're darned small ones and mostly found in folks' 'magination; but he's always loyal.'

"Yes, sir. And probably this very minute some old friend is asking another—

" 'Wonder where loyal old Mose is tonight?'

"Why, Miss Martha, we're like as two gloves in our natures. Well, let's eat."

"*M'm'selle,*" timidly began Baptiste, "I make no offense. But the man Page. I do not know if I like."

"I carry no pipes for him," said Martha. "I don't like nor dislike. He is not what he wants you to think he is."

"*Merci.* Old Papa has read many signs for many winter counts. But that man is something he can not read."

"He's a cussed fraud," warmly declared Shanty Mose. "He ain't no more of a grass farmer than I be. He's hiding from something. I can read him like an open book. Putting on airs about his piloting days! Bah! I don't say he ain't worked on the river, but he'd never drift 'way down to Blue Earth County if his slate was clean. No, sir!"

Miss Martha ended these references to Page by quietly informing him—

"Sioux men are coming."

Papa Baptiste darted a glance toward the west. Martha nodded; then called out—

"Are the Dakota men afraid of the fire?"

Four Indians, all young men, emerged from the growth and slowly came to the fire. Each carried a gun. Mose eyed them sharply, but Baptiste and Martha gave them no particular heed. They squatted in a row a short distance from the fire and glared hungrily at the food. Martha gave them a loaf of bread and a lump of black maple sugar and said—

"Shakopee's hunters go to the Big Woods?"

One of them tapped his gun, then threw it aside and replied:

"The hunting is bad. When our fathers were young it was good. The white people cut down the woods and drive game away."

"Chetan Wakan Mani told his Dakota brothers to sell the land to the whites," Martha reminded them.

They had nothing to say to this but bolted their bread and sugar and waited for more. She asked:

"Which of you is Brown Wing? You, the medicine woman thinks."

And she looked at the one who had spoken.

"He is Brown Wing," said one of the others as the hunter made no move to acknowledge his name.

"I carry a talk from the white trader Jones to Brown Wing. You know what it is. New grass has come twice. He does not care to wait any longer."

Brown Wing sullenly replied:

"The gun was bad. Brown Wing threw it away."

Martha stared at him thoughtfully, then gazed at his companions and said:

"The medicine woman sees Killing Ghost and Breaking Up. Who is the other hunter?"

Brown Wing answered—

"Runs against Something When Crawling."

"Pa-zo-i-yo-pa," she repeated in Santee. "The name will be remembered. Let the hunters keep away from the trader until the gun is found and taken back. He is very strong, very brave. The woods are big. Let the hunters keep away. There is no more bread and sugar for you."

They rose and with Brown Wing in the lead walked into the woods. Shanty Mose indignantly exclaimed:

"That's the Injun of it! Beg for victuals; then hoof it without even a thank-you!"

"*Là, là, m'sieur!*" said Papa Baptiste with a chuckle. "The Dakota never thank for food. They do not be polite when begging from each other. Why should they be polite to white folks?"

THE remaining distance to Acton Township was split into two easy marches to accommodate Mose, who traveled afoot most of the time, although Baptiste offered to share his rugged pony. When within a few miles of the Baker place they met two hunters who told Martha that twenty of Shakopee's band were in the woods, hunting in small parties.

Toward noon of Sunday, the seventeenth of August, the three were in the Pembina trail that passed from east to west within a few feet of the Baker house. Martha, who was in the lead, halted her horse and tilted her head to listen. Baptiste whispered—

"Indians are talking, *m'm'selle.*"

"The trader is angry," murmured Martha.

"Will he sell them rum?" asked Mose.

Without answering him Martha turned from the trail, dismounted and led the way through the growth a short distance and halted in sight of the house. Howard Baker and Jones were talking with six Sioux. Four of these were Brown Wing and his three companions. A third white man, a stranger to Baptiste and Martha, sat in the doorway.

Jones was angrily declaring:

"I want that gun back without any more talk. You know me. You know you can't come any games like that on Robinson Jones. Now you look sharp and fetch that gun."

His stepson, not relishing the argument, urged:

"They understand what you've said. Let's drop it, or we'll be scaring the company."

Through the open doorway Martha could catch glimpses of two women and two children. She knew these must be Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Baker, busy with the Sunday dinner. Then a third woman, a stranger, came from the house and climbed into a long wagon of household goods a short distance from the house. She began overhauling the load and picking out various articles. The man in the doorway went to help her and began carrying articles into the house.

Jones was angry, but said no more. Brown Wing said:

"Gun no good. Here is a good gun. Trade for trader's gun and five dollars."

Jones glanced at the gun the Indian was carrying and offered:

"I'll trade for my gun and give you three dollars. That's enough boot."

Brown Wing held out for five dollars, but suggested that they shoot at a mark so the trader could convince himself the gun was that much better than his. Jones agreed to this, and Baker was pleased to have done with the quarreling. While he was bringing his gun from the house and loading it the stranger made himself useful by affixing a target to an oak six rods from the house.

The six Indians stepped to the mark, electing to shoot first. In turn they fired rapidly.

Jones laughed at their marksmanship, although none had failed to make a respectable hit. In a bantering tone he said to Brown Wing:

"Can't you see that white men always shoot better than red men? The bow and arrow is your weapon. You never can learn a gun as a white man learns it."

With that he threw up his rifle and drilled a hole close to the bull'seye. Baker fired next and came within two inches of the bull'seye. Brown Wing had shot best for the Indians.

The Indians were a bit sullen over their defeat and began reloading as soon as they had fired. Jones' good nature was nearly restored, and he said:

"We won't say anything more about the gun you didn't bring back. I'll trade guns with you. But three dollars to boot is enough. I won't pay more."

With their guns loaded the Indians waited for Brown Wing to conclude the trading, Killing Ghost insisting they were losing too much time from hunting. Brown Wing said—

"Five dollars."

Baker stepped into the house long enough to hang up his empty gun by the fireplace and then came out and stood beside the door, smiling at Jones' efforts to beat the Indian's price down to three dollars. The stranger resumed his task of carrying articles from the wagon to the house. Jones was growing ugly again at Brown Wing's stubbornness. Miss Martha felt at her back and then remembered she was not carrying her bow and quiver. Baptiste's wrinkled face puckered into a frown, and he whispered something to Miss Martha. Shanty Mose yawned and muttered—

"No whisky-selling this trip."

Martha put her finger to her lips as a signal for him to keep quiet. Baptiste mopped the sweat from his face, breathed in relief and murmured—

"The Dakotas go back to their hunting." This as one of them started up the trail toward the Jones place.

Jones suddenly ceased talking and stared sharply at the five remaining Indians for a few seconds, then stepped around the corner of the house still in view of the woman and two men in the woods. He started to reload with nervous haste.

Killing Ghost, without lifting his gun from his left arm, shot Baker dead as he was stepping into the doorway. An instant later Mrs. Jones was shot and killed as she seated herself in a chair just inside the doorway. The next second the stranger fell dead from a bullet as he was reaching up his arms to take another load from the woman. As this man dropped the woman in the wagon fell forward on her face.

Mrs. Baker, carrying her youngest child, and standing back of Mrs. Jones, vanished as if by magic. The three were killed almost as quickly as one could count three.

As the shots rang out almost together Jones gave a leap and started to run, his gun not yet loaded. He almost reached a corncrib, three rods away from the house, when an Indian ran around the corner and shot him off his feet.

This man was Brown Wing. He waved his gun and shouted—

"Does the trader now say white men shoot straighter than the Dakota men?"

Then he turned back to join his companions. Without paying any attention to the woman in the wagon, and without entering the house to search for Mrs. Baker and the two children—the oldest child lying on a bed in plain view—the Indians ran swiftly down the trail to overtake the man ahead.

Stunned by the horrible sight, the unarmed spectators in the woods did not leave their hiding place until the Indians were running away. In truth, it was all over so quickly that the murderers had disappeared in the trail before the three could shake off their stupefaction.

Miss Martha was the first to break from cover. She ran to the cabin and entered without pausing to look at the dead men. She found Mrs. Jones dead in the chair. She heard Mrs. Baker screaming under the floor, and kneeled by the open trap door and helped her and the baby, both uninjured, to emerge.

By this time Shanty Mose and Baptiste were at the wagon and were lifting out the woman. She was unharmed. Sobbing wildly, she managed to tell them she was Mrs. Viranus Webster and that the dead man was her husband. She also informed them that they had arrived from Wisconsin only two days before and had accepted the Bakers' invitation to stop there while they looked about for a homestead.

By the time she had completed the brief and pitiful recital and was trying to realize that husband and friends had been wiped out almost in an instant Shanty Mose had reloaded Baker's gun and Baptiste had recovered Jones' weapon. Coming from the house with Baker's gun, Mose called to Baptiste:

"Harness the horses to the wagon. Get the women and children somewhere away from here."

Miss Martha directed:

"Drive them to John Blackwell's. It's only four miles. If no one's at home go on to Nels Olson. If it's safe to leave them there go on to Forest City and arouse the settlers and bring them here. If it doesn't seem safe take the wagon to Forest City. Mose and I will go on to the Jones place. Clara Wilson, Jones' niece, must be there with her baby half-brother."

Without bothering to go to the woods for her horse she started along the trail at a swift run. Shanty Mose pounded along at her heels, and demanded—

"Will we be in time, Miss Martha?"

"If Clara doesn't open the door. Yes. Jones always told her to keep the door locked when he and his wife's away."

But they were not in time. When some distance from the place they heard the dull boom of a gun and feared the worst. When they reached the house there were no Indians to be seen, but the glass in the storeroom window was shattered.

"Wait a minute, Miss Martha," said Mose.

And he advanced and looked in. Then he turned and told the waiting woman:

"They killed her while she was looking out the window. She looks very young."

"Scarcely fifteen," whispered Miss Martha. "You must go in and look for the baby."

Handing her his gun and leaving her to stand guard, he went through the broken window. None of the Sioux had entered, although there was much liquor stored in the room. Entering the living room, he found the baby asleep on the bed.

Coming out through the window—for Jones had locked girl and baby in when going to the Bakers'—Mose groaned and said—

"This is a mighty sad business. Miss Martha."

"I shall always feel bad I did not have my bow and arrows," she replied simply. "Could I have guessed in time I could have saved some of them without them. I am a medicine woman. They are afraid of me."

She took the eight-months-old child and for a moment; then asked:

"Can you find your way back to the lower agency? Or shall I go and you take the baby to Blackwell's place?"

"No! No! Don't leave the child with me. They tell me the Injuns won't hurt you. Take the youngster to the nearest house. I can make my way to the lower agency. They should know at once and catch the murderers when they return. Oh, Lord! What are we coming to!"

"I know the men who did it. I can point them out. Find Jones' horse and go at once. I'll start with the baby now and overtake Papa Baptiste."

He soon caught the horse but lost time locating the saddle. He struck south from the trail over an Indian game path that led from the woods to the Minnesota and rode recklessly, although expecting every minute to be waylaid by the Sioux. At the end of ten miles the horse went hopelessly lame, and he was compelled to proceed on foot.

THE SIX Mdewakanton men were also in great haste; they were afraid that the settlers might overtake them before they could make Little Six's village. At the first settler's place they came to they appropriated a wagon and two horses, drove at top speed and spoiled the horses in making the Minnesota. Without losing a minute they crossed and hurried to Little Six's village, six miles above the agency.

Arousing the chief, Killing Ghost announced:

"We have killed five whites. Two of them were women."

Little Six remained silent for a minute; then he said:

"This must be told to our people at once. If white people have been killed we must kill more, or they will come here and kill us."

Word was spread forthwith through the village that hunters had returned from the Big Woods after killing some white people. There was great excitement. Some of the Indians were frightened; others openly rejoiced. Little Six was excited but not frightened. After the men had gathered around him he told them:

"This is a bad business or a good business. We must tell this to Little Crow. What we do must be done by the time the sun comes up."

Accompanied by the murderers and followed by the male population of his village, he rode down to Little Crow's village, two miles above the agency. Little Crow's people heard the feet of the mob and were alarmed, not knowing what to think. Little Six shouted his name and hurried into Little Crow's house. The chief was in bed; he sat up when men crowded in.

"There is something to be talked," he said. "It must be a very big talk that can not wait until the light comes."

"Six of my young men have killed five white people in the Big Woods." Little Six informed him without any preamble.

"You have made war on the white people," said the chief. "No more gold will come to us. Soldiers will come here."

"What shall we do?" asked Little Six anxiously.

"Why do you come to me?" haughtily replied Little Crow. "You come into the wrong house. Go talk to Traveling Hail, the man you named Speaker."

He was referring to the recent bitter, three-cornered political fight when he and Big Eagle and Traveling Hail were candidates for the office of new Chief Speaker. The last named had been elected, and Little Crow was much humiliated. His defeat was due to his activity in having promoted the sale of the Minnesota lands to the whites.

"They will send soldiers to shoot us," said Brown Wing.

"No. They will kill you with a rope," corrected Little Crow.

"Then they will shoot many of us. White men do not know one Dakota man from another when they want to kill one."

"Kill the whites! Kill all the whites in Minnesota!" yelled an Indian in the doorway.

"Kill all the traders!" howled another.

"Kill all the Cut-Hairs, who forget they ever were Dakota men!"

Wapasha, principal chief of the Mdewakanton band, as had been his father and grandfather, forced his way into the room and loudly cried:

"Do you want to kill yourselves? What foolish talk do I hear? It will take a long time to count the white men in Minnesota. It would take many men a lifetime to count the men our Grandfather in Washington can send here with big guns. The young men have done a bad thing. Shall the Red Leaf band of the Mdewakanton be killed because our young men have done a bad thing?"

"They will kill all of us if we do not kill them!" cried Breaking Up.

"Let Little Crow speak for us. His words are wise," shouted a man through the small window.

"You heard Wapasha, who likes white men," said Little Crow. "If you want wise words send for Traveling Hail. He is your Chief Speaker. Why come to me? You did not want me as Chief Speaker. Now you have made war on the whites you must hear the wise words of Traveling Hail."

Big Eagle, of the white man's party, shouted:

"This is a very bad business. We must not make it worse by killing any more white people."

Wacouta, of the peace party, insisted:

"These young men must be taken to the agency. They must tell Major Galbraith what they have done and say they are sorry."

"Kill all the whites! Kill all the Cut-Hairs! Kill the traders!"

"We will take back all our lands!"

"Little Crow shall be our leader!"

From then on no one would listen to the voice of peace. Little Crow got out of bed and demanded silence.

"You named a new Chief Speaker, but he has no talk for you. You would not name Chetan Wakan Mani, and his heart was sad. Now you are in trouble and come for help. He will forget what happened. He will help you.

"You have stepped into swift water and waded too far from the bank to go back. You must cross to the other bank. You will all be killed if you do not make a big fight very quick.

"The Grandfather in Washington is having much trouble. He needs all his soldiers in the big war. But he will find some men to hurt you. There always are more white men when you think you have counted the last. If you are brave all the whites in Minnesota can be driven across the Mississippi. Then we can live as Dakota men used to live. All the goods of the white men shall be ours.

"We must attack the agency within a few hours. Andrew Myrick said we could eat grass when hungry. We will kill all the traders. Myrick shall eat grass. The men must clean the guns. The women must run many bullets. This will be a very big fight. If any leader tries to keep you from fighting, shoot him. He has turned white and is not a Dakota man."

Shouts of approval greeted this speech. Big Eagle, who lived on Crow Creek near Little Crow's village, called his thirty-odd fighting men together and urged them to go home and keep away from trouble. Most of these were inclined to follow this advice.

Not until they saw blood running and houses and stores being looted would the more cautious of the Sioux give way to savagery. Men of other bands stole away in the early morning, refusing to take the bloody step.

Big Eagle did not go home, but remained to accompany the war party and to save his white friend, George Spencer, from being killed. Other Indians, opposing the massacre, also remained for a similar purpose. Even many of the Sioux who were yelling, "Kill! Kill!" did not wish death for every white man and woman.

Almost every one of Little Crow's and Little Six's bands had some one white friend he wished to save. But none of these cared anything about saving some companion's friend. Soldier lodges had been raised, and there had been a strong undercurrent of hostility against the whites in the red man's party. The outbreak was unexpectedly precipitated by the Acton massacre. Even those leaders who had plotted and urged a war of extermination on the whites were caught unprepared.

Little Crow, who had attended church while the Acton people were being killed, who had professed love for the whites and their teachings, and who had remained after the service to shake hands with everybody was now in his element. It fed his vanity to hear those who had refused to vote for him at the Chief Speaker election now plead for his advice. He craved power, and it pleased him to observe how entirely the men of various bands depended upon his leadership.

He dressed and painted and rapidly gave orders for the attack. Small parties of scouts ran off in the early morning light to kill outlying settlers. All guns were overhauled and cleaned. The squaws worked frantically in melting lead and running bullets. Some of the squaws made ready to drive or haul carts to the agency to be filled with loot. Two men were directed to steal swift horses, carry a talk to Little Priest and urge him to come down with his Winnebagoes and share in the fighting and plundering.

WHEN the main body of the hostile Indians started for the agency Killing Ghost and Godfrey the colored man came in with a prisoner. Godfrey was angry because he had been prevented from cutting the prisoner's throat. In explaining why he had bothered to take a prisoner Killing Ghost said—

"He wears some medicine on his shirt."

Little Six stared at Murray Fall and saw the stuffed crowskin, once worn by Little Crow. He said:

"This man saved the life of Chetan Wakan Mani. He must not be hurt. Take him with us so he can not run and tell."

Murray had been captured on the New Ulm road within a mile or two of the agency. In his impatience to reach the agency by sunrise he had traveled through the darkness since midnight.

His mind had been filled with agreeable thoughts. The few holidays ahead held amazing possibilities of happiness. The Potter girl was an agreeable acquaintance. He knew she would prove a good friend. He had anticipated much pleasure in her company and that of the Ohio girl. Since coming to Minnesota it was his second release from farm drudgery. His mind had made joyous daylight of the dark and lonely road.

Without any intimation that a red or white man was near him he had been seized. He was bewildered to the point of befuddlement. He felt himself tugged and pulled and pushed into the red village. The Indians did not seem real, and their voices came from a distance. His wits cleared a bit as Little Six finished speaking. In English he said:

"Where is Little Crow? I want to speak to him. I want to know what this means?"

"Little Crow has much to do this morning," gravely remarked a Sioux who read and wrote English as fluently as he spoke it.

"But I don't understand this business. What's the matter? Where's my horse?"

"Shut up! I'll cut your —— throat yet!" growled Godfrey.

"In a fair fight I can break your back, you —— hound!" snarled Murray.

"The young man is not to be hurt," sternly the chief reminded them. "Shakopee, son of Good Road, grandson of Shakopee, has said it."

Little Crow strode into the circle, heavily painted. Murray first recognized him by the wristbands of skunkskin and called out to him. The chief did not appear to have heard him; nor did he glance at him. Raising a hand with a flourish, he announced—

"It is time to go."

With these few words were initiated the series of massacres in Minnesota which were to cost more than a thousand white lives and to frighten several thousand settlers from the State, many of whom would not return. The outbreak might be said to have its beginning in the Acton murders. But that had been an individual enterprise and doubtless had not been planned until the Indians reached a conclusion and exchanged signals just before, or immediately after, the white men's guns were empty from target-shooting.

Murray had no idea of the true situation. Now that he was recovering from amazement he was angry to have his arrival at the agency delayed for even a few hours. He was not afraid. His major emotion was rage against Godfrey. Even while the men were charging back and forth on their ponies and running about afoot he did not suspect the truth.

When the village emerged from shouting and senseless commotion and something like order was restored to the long files of fighting men Murray felt relief. The Indians were moving toward the agency and were taking him along. He began to see some humor in the situation. It would afford amusement for the young ladies when they heard how he had been escorted in by Sioux men. He knew that the Indians' early-morning errand could be nothing more serious than a demand for their summer money.

When a mile from the village an Indian painted black and wearing only a breech cloth rode furiously up to the band of Sioux. On spying Murray walking near the head of the procession between two of Little Crow's men the newcomer gave a yell, drove his pony forward, leaned from the saddle and stabbed at Murray with a long knife. Being out of reach, Murray, although uneasy, believed it was a bit of showing off.

"Why does he live?" the Sioux shouted, making another futile attempt to reach the prisoner.

"He wears the medicine crow of Chetan Wakan Mani," cried one of the guards, pushing the knife blade aside with his gun barrel.

"He must die!" shrieked the man. "Cut Nose has promised his medicine to kill every white he can reach."

And he renewed his efforts to inflict a mortal wound.

One guard seized his knife hand while the other turned the pony about.

"You can not reach this man. Your medicine will not be angry," shouted one of the guards.

The other added:

"This man wears the crows. It makes him red."

Cut Nose furiously endeavored to turn his pony back and fulfil his medicine pledge. A deep voice called out for him to desist, and Little Crow rode his pony between Cut Nose and Murray.

"There are many whites ahead waiting to be killed," he told Cut Nose. "They can be killed in their beds before they wake up. They can be chopped down in their stores as they open their doors. This man is not white while he carries the crow."

Murray had recognized the speaker, but understood nothing he said. Cut Nose, demoniacal in his lust to slay, was reluctant to abandon the first victim he had met. He repeated—

"There is what I said to my medicine—to kill every white I see."

Without looking at Murray Little Crow sternly replied:

"There is a promise to my medicine. It will be very bad for any man to hurt the young man while he wears the crow. These men of my village will shoot the man who tries to hurt him."

With a howl of rage Cut Nose wheeled his pony and raced off to find some other victim for butchery.

Murray had commenced to feel worried. But he had seen the show of bad temper at the upper agency, when many more Indians were gathered. No one had been hurt yet. He was worried but kept telling himself it would all end as it had up the river.

On the outskirts of the agency he saw a barefooted boy, carrying two pails of water, standing on top of a low hill and watching the Sioux, who were now breaking up into small bands. This was John Ames Humphrey, the twelve-year-old-son of the agency physician.

At the foot of the hill and a short distance in front of the Sioux a white teamster drove a pair of horses toward a wagon. The Indians, so early abroad, did not interest the man. He began hitching the horses to the wagon. One of Little Crow's men galloped up to him and demanded the horses.

Holding the Sioux in contempt and angered by the fellow's insolence, the teamster curtly told him to go to —— and continued his task. The Indian promptly shot him through the abdomen with a shotgun and finished him with the butt of the weapon.

Murray felt deathly sick. The barefooted boy disappeared from the hill at a run. Sharp orders were passed for the men to press on for the surprize attack before the boy could give the alarm. This was the beginning of the killings at the lower agency on Bloody Monday, the eighteenth of August.

Murray was held back among the squaws and carts that he might not shout a warning. De Camp was away, hurrying to overtake Major Galbraith, who was taking some enlisted men to Fort Snelling.

The mill was not running, and the mill men were sleeping late or idling about the agency. Divoll was sweeping up some litter in front of the store. Andrew Myrick was inside, busy arranging some goods. Trader Lynde from his doorway saw some Indians coming and remarked:

"Wish they was bringing some trade. They're never so poor they can't waste ammunition shooting off guns."

Divoll straightened, facing the speaker, and replied:

"Andrew got word from Ridgely last evening that the money is on the way and will be here soon. They'll be glad to hear that. Probably have heard it already and are coming early to bother us till it does come. There'll be a grand volley when they know it's arrived. They've been disappointed so many times——"

"My God! Look out!" shouted Lynde.

Divoll fell on his broom, riddled by two barrels of buckshot without even having heard the report of the gun that killed him. And the massacre was on.

Lynde was shot before he could close the door of his store. Myrick ran to the front of his store and was instantly killed and thrown outside, and his mouth was stuffed with grass.

Such evil had never been within the limits of Murray's imagination. With mouth gaping he leaned against a cart to which he had been tied. It was such a terrible dream. He saw Indians darting into stores, government buildings, dwelling houses and storehouses. There was a horrible noise of human voices crying out in rage, fear or despair.

Clouds of smoke began driving the looters from several buildings. Provisions and goods were being dumped in front of stores. Squaws began quarreling violently with each other over the division of the loot. Bags of flour and sugar were broken open. Flames began to show.

Big Eagle arrived and started a search for his friend Spencer. Others looked for particular friends and in doing so killed each other's friends. All the Indians, nearly five hundred of them, were well armed. Some had good army rifles; but the majority carried double-barrel shotguns of ten or twelve bore and reinforced toward the breech to shoot balls. These were very accurate up to three hundred yards. They had been provided by the government to be used for game, including buffalo. The Indians reloaded them when running at full speed, and they were much more effective than the army rifles.

The negro Godfrey came from the direction of the boarding house. Dickinson, his family and a few others, were the first to escape by the ferry, crossing in a two-horse wagon. Godfrey was raging because he had missed the boardinghouse keeper, but that he had found other victims was suggested by several watches fastened to the breast of his shirt and a woman's cap tied on his head. He was screaming like a madman and stared straight into Murray's white face without seeing him.

The Sioux now began adorning their persons with loot. Some wore woman's bonnets. Nearly every man had brooches or gold chains hanging from his neck. A man, smeared to his elbows, had watches for earrings. Another had the wheels of a clock fastened to his ears. Those who found furs hung them from their legs or waists. Shawls were set aside for saddle cloths. Much that was valuable was trampled into the dirt; and much that was insignificant was seized upon and retained as being greatly desirable.

Each time the dazed Murray caught a glimpse of Godfrey the man had added to his collection of watches. Now people were being killed at and beyond the ferry.

One of the first Sioux to cross the river came back in frantic haste to announce that Dickinson had met Major Benjamin Randall within two miles of the agency and that soldiers would soon be coming from Fort Ridgely. Even while he was making this report to the leaders Major Randall was sending Captain Marsh with some two-score men to oppose half a thousand Sioux, well armed and confident because of their initial success.

* * *

MANY of the Indians rushed to the ferry to ambush Marsh. A Sioux ran up to Murray, knife lifted. Murray tried to kick him. It was Killing Ghost. He cut the bonds that fastened Murray to the cart, seized his arm and said:

"Come! Bad to be here. Little Crow says, 'Come.' "

With weak, unsteady steps Murray walked from the awful scene, his mind not yet able to function properly. His hands were tied at his back, but his escort kept a firm grip on his shoulder. He had no idea of how long he walked when he was brought to a halt near a house. Killing Ghost tied a rope around his neck in a slip noose, drew it uncomfortably close, fastened the end to a branch and ran to the barn.

The place was quiet and peaceful. It could hear none of the alarming sounds from the agency. He heard a boy asking permission to go up to the agency and play with the children. The woman inside the house refused. He afterward learned this was Joseph De Camp's wife.

Killing Ghost came from the barn, leading two harnessed horses. He was hitching them to a wagon when Mrs. De Camp appeared, ran to him and demanded—

"What are you doing with our horses?"

"My horses," replied the Sioux. "All here is mine. All white people up there are killed."

And he pointed in the direction of the agency. In Sioux he added a warning for Mrs. De Camp to run away with her two children.

His words were heard by two kitchen girls, and Lucy, a mixed blood, began screaming—

"We will all be killed!"

The other girl, a German, ran out and

started for the ferry, a fourth of a mile away. Murray tried to call out to the woman that the Indian spoke the truth and nearly strangled in the attempt. Mrs. De Camp did not see him. That she did not believe the warning was shown by her deliberation in returning to the house.

The Sioux drove the wagon to Murray and lifted him in but did not remove the rope that was half-choking him. They mounted a hill, and Killing Ghost halted the wagon while he enjoyed the panorama revealed from the height. Murray managed to raise his head above the side of the cart for a moment. The agency buildings were in flames. The warehouses were burning fiercely, and hundreds of Indians were dancing around them. There were many people at the ferry.

Mrs. De Camp, carrying a sick child and followed by her two boys, one of four and one of nine years, came up the hill and learned the truth at a glance. Lucy, the kitchen girl, gave one look and ran away. Wacouta's mother ran up, screaming in Sioux:

"Run, run! They will kill you, white squaw!"

And she swung the four-year-old boy over her shoulder and started for Wapasha's village a mile away.

Killing Ghost suddenly desired to travel away from the scene. He whipped up the horses and started for Wapasha's village, perhaps because the Indian woman had taken that direction. Murray's choking and groaning finally attracted the Sioux's attention, and he reined in long enough to lean back and release the noose.

Murray tried to get his guard to pick up the De Camps and Wacouta's mother; but the man only whipped the horses and traveled the faster. A short distance from the hill they met a large number of Indians, all in war paint and armed with guns and clubs, bows and arrows.

Wapasha was leading them, riding his big white horse. He had on his headdress of red flannel with its bullock horns and eagle-feathers and was wearing new thigh leggings of fringed buckskin. Besides an excellent rifle he had two revolvers.

After making his peace talk at Little Crow's village he had returned home to find his men eager for war. Little Crow had sent word to his men to kill him if he refused to lead them. Now he was on his way to fight the whites, although he had preferred peace.

Runners had met his band and told them that the agency people had been killed and the stores and warehouses looted. As an earnest of their success some alcohol taken from Dr. Humphrey's medical stores was produced and passed among Wapasha's men. Those who consumed it were quickly affected and acted like madmen.

One who discovered Murray in the cart began screaming and prancing around in a small circle. Suddenly, before his purpose was guessed, he ran toward the cart, holding a percussion-cap revolver in both hands. He pointed it at the prisoner and pulled the trigger. All the chambers discharged as one, the flames flashing back into the man's face and sending him groveling in the dirt.

Murray knew that the revolver had been loaded with bullets that were a bit too small. He had seen a revolving rifle behave in the same eccentric and dangerous fashion. Wapasha jumped his horse forward and loudly cried:

"No bullet can hurt the man who wears the medicine crow of Chetan Wakan Mani. See what happens when a foolish man makes the medicine angry."

And he pointed dramatically at the unharmed prisoner and then at the groaning Indian, face down on the ground.

Killing Ghost got his wagon in motion and would have lashed the horses into a gallop if it had not been for the carts and wagons streaming from the village to get a share of the plunder. By this time the first loaded wagons began arriving from the agency. Many of the latter were in the care of the squaws, who scolded and quarreled at the top of their voices.

The loaded vehicles became entangled with the stream of empty carts. Wapasha's men crowded about the former and acted with the irresponsibility of little children. Much food was thrown away and spoiled. Shouts of laughter were caused when feather beds were ripped open and the morning air was filled with the swirling contents.

Along with the loaded wagons were a score of Indians who had looted Dr. Humphrey's office and were anxious to withdraw from the fighting long enough to get drunk. These had not only brought "white whisky" —alcohol—but everything else found in bottles. Several were soon stretched on the ground, groaning fearfully from the effects of various medical preparations.

A man, whose feathers showed that he had served as leader on three big paths against the Chippewas, seated himself on the ground and smashed a big clock to pieces that he might secure the works and string them around his neck. A man galloped up, holding a doll in one hand, a knife in the other, and yelled—

"We have killed them all!"

Then he scalped the doll, wheeled and hastened back.

Another rode up, his pony in a lather, and excitedly cried:

"They say soldiers are coming from Ridgely! They say all will be killed in the tall grass by the river-crossing."

He, too, turned back so as not to miss the new massacre.

Wapasha's men became impatient at the delay and insisted on taking an active part in the killings. Murray's captor jumped from the cart, declaring:

"Let some other man watch this white man who wears the crow of Chetan Wakan Mani. Killing Ghost helped kill three men and two women in the Big Woods. Now his arm is rested. He goes back to feed his knife."

Wapasha knew he must lead his men if he would remain their chief. He also knew it would be very bad if Little Crow's protégé should come to harm in his village. The chief glanced over his warriors and selected one whose heart was not strong for bloodshed for the simple reason that he could look ahead and read the price that must be paid. To him he said:

"Let Running Dog take the white man to our village. Chetan Wakan Mani will be glad."

Running Dog was free to refuse or accept the suggestion. He cut Murray's bonds and pulled him from the cart, and warned:

"You come. You stay. You run. You killed."

Wapasha and his band swept on toward the agency and the ferry. Murray, limping because of restricted circulation, remarked—

"You're leaving the cart."

Running Dog glanced at him shrewdly and remarked:

"Bimeby white man come and look for his cart. No good. Walk."

"Why did they do it?" groaned Murray.

The Indian did not answer.

They left the path to avoid the empty carts trying to force a passage between the loaded vehicles. Murray said—

"You have not killed any one."

Running Dog's little eyes glinted.

"White man never forget. Sometime, bimeby, white man say:

" 'Running Dog didn't kill. Some men in our band say Running Dog —— fool to keep knife clean. Some —— fool live long time and see men killed by rope.' "

Now that the first paralyzing shock was wearing off Murray began to think about individuals.

"Reynolds!" he suddenly cried. "There is a man named Reynolds. There are women at his house. Has anything happened to them?"

Running Dog paid no attention to the query. Murray fiercely demanded—

"You won't tell a man who wears Little Crow's medicine?"

The Indian remained silent. After a few minutes a mounted Sioux with a horrible gash across his chest came up behind them, his sunken eyes staring ahead to find the village. Running Dog stepped out, caught the pony by the bit and put some swift questions. Aroused to life, the man faintly answered him, then rode on, reeling in the saddle.

They were in sight of Wapasha's village when Running Dog sullenly informed Murray:

"The dying man told me there are white women at Reynolds' place. They say the black man—Godfrey—and some of Little Crow's warriors said they would go there before the white people could get away."

CHAPTER VII

THE GROWING HORROR

THERE was a general returning of warriors and squaws to the villages in the late afternoon. Small bands of men scattered to burn isolated houses, but the greater part of the Sioux from all the Indian towns were content to call it a day's work.

The squaws brought in much plunder and filled Wacouta's village with their disputes over a division of the spoils. Prisoners, too, were brought in. Murray Fall was sorry to behold Shanty Mose walking behind a cart, his hands tied at his back and a noosed rope around his neck.

Murray, free to move about and seemingly unnoticed by the Sioux, ran to him and commiserated.

"This is too bad, Mose. What awful things have happened! I keep thinking I must wake up and find it a lying dream. How did they catch you?"

"I was trying to make the agency with word of some killings up north. Miss Martha sent me. Horse played out. —— was loose by the time I sighted the river. Cap'n Marsh tried to cross near the ferry. He and nearly all his men was killed or drowned. Soldier trying to make the fort told me there's only thirty white men at Ridgely and a dozen breeds. Guess they'll all be killed with all their folks. Guess they'll kill me. You seem to be all right. If I'm done for get the papers in my inside coat pocket and see they're delivered."

"They sha'n't kill you!" fiercely cried Murray. "My God! Such a sight!"

"Don't look!" panted Mose.

But both had seen; a warrior was galloping his pony along the north edge of the village with what had been a white woman dragging at the end of a long rope.

The darkening horizon swam mistily before Murray's horrified eyes, and only by a mighty effort did he fight off the sickness and keep his feet. Staring at Mose so he might not observe any other terrible sight, he advanced and removed the noose.

The squaw in the cart at once leaped from the seat and, shrieking like a devil-cat, ran to the prisoner with uplifted ax. Several warriors shouted encouragement. Murray grappled with her and tore the ax from her hand and hurled her back. Screaming shrilly, she gathered herself to attack him, her hand pulling a short skinning knife from her skirt. The men shouted approval, but warned:

"Kill the old man! Do not touch the young man. He wears the crow of Chetan Wakan Mani. Kill the old man slowly!"

Her fierce gaze weakened as she beheld the crowskin pinned on Murray's shirt. She began circling about to get at Shanty Mose. The laughing warriors formed a wide circle. Murray kept between her and the prisoner. One of the men, mad from drinking raw alcohol, became impatient over the cruel play and began creeping in from the circle, short ax in hand.

"Git back, you bloody ——!" roared Mose, his short side whiskers bristling.

Murray wheeled, darted between the two, plucked the crowskin from his shirt and pinned it on his friend. This act angered the drunken man and he would have brained Murray had not two men leaped forward, caught his arm and dragged him back.

"He can be killed when he does not wear the crow!" yelled the would-be killer.

"The medicine is very strong. They say it covers him," said one of the two.

The squaw ceased her efforts on beholding Little Crow's symbol on her prisoner's breast. Then she broke from the circle on observing that some squaws were stealing from her cart. Murray released Mose's hands. After rubbing them smartly to restore circulation Mose returned the crowskin, saying:

"Wear it yourself. I won't."

As Murray was replacing it on his shirt two boys, neither more than sixteen years of age, ran up. Each was flourishing a butcher knife, and both were yelling that they would skin the prisoner alive. Murray caught one under the chin with his clenched fist and sent him headlong to the ground. But the other would surely have killed Mose had not Wacouta suddenly appeared in the ring, caught the young demon's arm and hurled him back. The two were his sons, lusting to kill where as the father, of the white man's party, would spare.

"Do not touch these two men!" he cried. "This is not time and place to kill prisoners. This man here is covered by a strong medicine."

And he placed a hand on the frightened Murray's shoulder.

"Let the young man wear the crow. He must not give it to another if he would live," angrily spoke up one of the men who had dragged the drunken savage away from Shanty Mose.

Murray did not understand this. Wacouta enlightened him by warning in English—

"You keep it." And he touched the scarred crowskin. "You keep it and live. You give to a man, to a woman, you die bimeby."

To the scowling circle he harangued:

"You Dakota men say Wacouta must lead you to a fight. Your chief will lead you, but fighting white men is bad. Killing this white man is very bad. Wacouta will lead you to a fight, but no prisoners taken by my band can be killed unless the band so says over a smoke. There will soon be a big talk here to find out what he will do next. We must be very wise. We have no time now in killing one white man whose hands have been tied."

Turning to Murray, he ordered:

"Go to that house. Take the man with you. Keep in the house."

And he nodded toward a small frame structure on the edge of the village.

Further to insure their safety he walked behind them to the door. The house was empty. Wacouta did not enter, but, halting at the door, he said:

"Very bad. Wacouta talks peace. His men will fight. If they drink more white whisky Wacouta's voice will sound far off. Bimeby they kill all —— white men they see. Run away in the dark when the big talk begins."

He closed the door but soon returned with a pail of water which he handed in, also a box of figs that a few hours before had been on a trader's shelf. As he was withdrawing Shanty Mose asked—

"How shall I get away?"

"Swim. Can't swim? Die in the river. Better die in water than by tomahawk," was the terse reply.

The small room was filled with dusk. Standing back a few feet from the small window, the two men stared out on the quarreling, exulting men and women, now insanely dancing around the fires. Two or three men occasionally rode their ponies into the firelight, waved scalps on sticks and boasted of murders committed at unsuspecting farmhouses. Each such arrival was greeted with whoops of rejoicing. Those Indians who had bottles tied to their wrists would seize the newcomers and give them drinks. The bottles contained medicines and liniment as well as alcohol. It resulted that more than one fighting man was soon stretched in pain on the ground, or lying insensible.

"Never knew they could be like this," faintly whispered Murray.

"I've seen them before on a rampage," muttered Mose. "Wish all them bottles was filled with arsenic. Old Wacouta was right. Drowning will be much better."

"I'll never forget the sights I saw at the agency!" gasped Murray, wiping the sweat from his face. "Never dreamed anything like it could be possible!"

"They fetched me through the agency," sighed Mose. "I saw men and women hewed to pieces before they could get out of bed. Philander Prescott was the first dead man I saw. They'd chopped off his head. And he married a Sioux woman and lived among them all these long years! Just after they snagged me near the ferry I saw Narcis Gerrian jump from the mill window. He was shot three times before he could make the river. But his death wa'n't bad. He didn't suffer any. * "

"Wacouta is friendly, but he can't control his men," muttered Murray. "Let's go up into the loft. If any Indians look in and find the room empty they'll pass on."

"Go ahead. I'll fetch the water," agreed Mose. "When it gets darker I'll make a break. You're safe here. Outside in the dark you'd be killed before they could see the crowskin."

"No, no. I can't stay here. I'd go crazy. I must go with you. Hark! That's a white voice. God help him!"

"—— him and roast him!" gritted Mose, one foot on the ladder. "That's a devil's voice. It's Godfrey, the colored man. Up with you!"

They gained the loft, closed the trap and lay on the floor close to the small window. A crowd of fresh arrivals were dancing frenziedly about, flourishing soldiers' rifles and ripping knapsacks to pieces. These were some of the spoils taken from Captain Marsh's company. Godfrey appeared in the firelight. He had more watches strung around his waist.

The door opened below, and Mose squirmed back to the trap. A child's shrill voice penetrated the hoarse clamor like a thin knife-blade, asking—

"Are we going to be killed now, mama?"

"Oh, God! I can't stand that!" groaned Mose, opening the trap and preparing to descend.

Mrs. De Camp and her children stood near the foot of the ladder. Wacouta from the doorway was saying:

"Very bad. White squaw stay here." He handed out a box of figs, such as he had given the men. "Two white men there."

And he pointed and called the woman's attention to Mose and Murray. Then to the latter he called out:

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* Mose was mistaken. Gerrian was shot three times, twice through the breast. Yet he swam the river and dragged himself sixty-five miles through woods and swamps and was taken to Henderson by refugees.

"Go back. Bad down here."

He retired, closing the door.

Light from a new fire vaguely illuminated the room. Mrs. De Camp tried to hush the older boy's shrill voice as it persisted in repeating the awful question. Mose reached back and secured the pail of water, followed by Murray. He gave the woman his box of figs, saying:

"Slim fodder for youngsters. You'll need both, ma'am. We'll stay down here and you take the youngsters to the loft.

He started to take the water back. She halted him, saying:

"I think we'll be safe here. Wapasha and Wacouta are friendly. Most of the Indians outside belong to their bands. I thought all this terrible work was done by the upper Indians, the Sissetons. I'm afraid some of our lower Indians were at the agency."

"They were there, ma'am," assured Mose. "I saw them. Their leaders can't control them. We must all get away from here tonight."

"No. I can travel only at a walk with the children. I can't travel secretly as the younger two will cry or talk," she whispered. "If any of the upper Indians caught us——"

She paused and for a moment her eyes lost their courage.

"But I know Wapasha and Wacouta, and they will help me," she added. "I've fed so many of their people I don't think their men will harm me. Hush, dear. You won't be hurt."

The last as the nine-year-old again asked the question. Then to Mose:

"It's no time for you men to leave now. Go back into the loft until the speaking begins. If you're found down here it'll be worse for all of us."

"I'll go, but I'll be at the trap door, ready to jump down if I'm needed," said Mose. "But this young fellow can stay with you. He's safe so long as they can see the crowskin he's wearing."

HE RAN up the ladder, and Murray gave the children water and figs and induced Mrs. De Camp to eat. In a low tone to escape the children's ears she told Murray much he had witnessed from the hill near the De Camp home. What she had endured since leaving the hill was a new and tragic chapter. Had it not been for Wacouta's old mother she and her children would have been slain, she insisted.

In turn he explained how he came by the crowskin and was completing his narrative when the door flew violently open and two Indians brought in three white girls. One appeared to be barely conscious and was supported by her companions.

"Our friend has been shot in the back," one of the girls told Mrs. De Camp. "She must lie down somewhere."

And her gaze darted to the ladder and the trap door.

"Elizabeth Potter!" mumbled Murray.

She was pale but held her head high. Her neat traveling dress of brown and white shepherd check with its voluminous breadths of silk seemed sadly out of place in such tragic surroundings. Murray mechanically noted the brown cloth shoes that matched the dress and the traveling cape of black net banded with silk. The other girls were much disheveled, and their hair hung in tangles over their shoulders.

Elizabeth's head was surmounted by a white straw bonnet, trimmed with lavender and with flowers, making gay the front of the flaring rim. The bands of white lutestring were primly tied under the round, determined chin. It was plain she had been about to travel when captured.

"Murray Fall!" she faltered, her eyes dilating in amazement.

"I was riding into the agency early this morning to find you when—it began to happen."

"Help us get Mary Anderson upstairs. She's been sadly hurt. This is Mattie Williams, my Ohio friend, and Mr. Reynolds' niece."

"We're all going to be killed," whispered the Williams girl.

"Hush! We mustn't frighten any little folks," cautioned Mrs. De Camp. "It's best that the three of you go to the loft. Take the water with you. We'll get more."

Mose, listening at the trap door, came down the ladder far enough to lend a hand with the wounded girl. She did not appear to be suffering; nor did she lament her sad fate.

"There was Mary Swandt, the hired girl," she said, as if endeavoring to refresh her recollection. "Mary Swandt, the hired girl. She must have been killed."

They got her into the loft, followed by the Williams girl carrying the pail of water.

Murray then descended to urge Elizabeth Potter to join her friends. As she placed one trim foot on the ladder she whispered to him:

"When the first word reached the Reynolds place a Mr. Patoile and Lee Davis of Shakopee were there. They took us in a wagon down the river road. Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds rode off in a buggy. We got separated from them. I thought we were all right. We were nearly opposite the fort and the men were trying to think how we could cross when some Indians rode up."

She paused and her lips trembled. After a bit she regained self-control and drearily continued:

"They killed the two men. We girls ran. Mary Anderson was ahead. They shot her in the back. I don't know where the Swandt girl is. Dead probably. I pray so, if she didn't escape."

"We'll get out of this. We'll get away," muttered Murray in a husky voice. "Go up with the others. I'll stay down here."

She mounted the ladder as if very weary. The trap door had hardly closed when there sounded loud shouting outside the door and torches glared at the window. Then the door flew open and a young German girl darted in, screaming. Behind her were Indians with guns and torches and the man Godfrey.

"Save me! Save me!" screamed the girl, running to Mrs. De Camp, clinging to her and hiding her face on the matron's breast.

The Indians had been drinking and were in a devilish mood. Wacouta's two young sons were with them. Godfrey made to tear the girl away from Mrs. De Camp. The woman wheeled, placing the girl behind her with the children in the corner. In the Indian tongue she sternly demanded:

"Who is this black man to come in here where Wapasha and Wacouta have stood and said we should not be hurt? Do you Dakota men have no leaders that you must follow this black man? Is he your chief? You Dakota men will be very sorry if you do not drive this man away and follow him."

Then in English—

"You shall surely hang, Godfrey, if you lay a hand on this girl."

"I have shown the Dakota men how to kill!" shouted the negro, waving a knife. "I killed eleven. Little Six says his arm aches from killing. Both my arms ache. I want that girl."

"You can't have her!" cried Murray, stepping before the monster. "Be careful how you touch a man who wears the crow."

Godfrey grated:

"—— you! I ain't no Injun to be afraid of a dead crow."

And he lunged with his knife.

Murray, watchful, evaded the thrust, seized the hand and wrist with his two hands and with a sudden twist all but fractured the wrist. The knife dropped to the floor. Mrs. De Camp kicked it behind her. With a howl of pain the man wrenched himself loose and drew back, nursing his wrist.

With ferocious interest the Indians watched the brief encounter. They were not so lost to reason as to forget the homage due to the totem mark of Chetan Wakan Mani. But the protection of the crow did not extend to the De Camp family nor to the terrified domestic, now huddled against the wall in the corner, both arms across her face. On the other hand it would be grave insult to the sacred pigeon-hawk medicine to harm its wearer in reaching the victims. Murray felt something slipped into his hand. Mrs. De Camp had passed him Godfrey's knife.

The negro started for him, his hooked fingers stretched before him. Murray flashed the weapon into view and slashed at the evil face. With a yell of fear the negro leaped back. An Indian laughed as if amused. Godfrey wheeled and tried to take a gun from one of Wacouta's sons. The boy scowled murderously and advised:

"Kill a man and take his gun."

And he held the gun behind him. By becoming an object for derision Godfrey had greatly lessened the danger from the wild group.

One of the men muttered:

"The crow medicine of Chetan Wakan Mani is very strong. It helped a young man to take a knife from a strong man."

The tide completely turned when Wacouta forced his way through the blocked doorway. He was carrying a pail of water. He read the situation in a glance and fiercely told the Dakotas:

"You are men of my band. You break in where I have put prisoners. You said I must lead you to war. Why should I lead men who have no ears and forget my words? I see two sons here. Why should Wacouta lead men who will not follow him? Without a leader you are foolish men. You will all be killed. Out of this house, or get a new leader."

He lowered the pail of water to the floor and threw up his arms as if to shoo them from the room. The Indians sullenly withdrew. The colored man, finding himself alone, hurriedly retreated. When the room was cleared of intruders Wacouta told Mrs. De Camp:

"All prisoners will be taken to a new camp tomorrow. All of my men are not young and foolish. They have old heads. You and your children and the women will not be hurt. Fort Ridgely will be burned and every one killed. New Ulm will be burned and the whites killed.

"If you try to get to a white town you will all be killed. If you stay with my band you will be safe. We may go to Little Crow's camp in the morning. Then we will go to a big new camp, where all prisoners will be kept.

"By another sun the men will not kill the prisoners. Old men are telling them to keep their prisoners to trade for peace after we have burned and killed all this side of the Mississippi. You stay here. The young squaws will stay here. There will be carts to ride in. You white women will not be hurt. It is very bad business."

"Has there been any fighting at the upper agency?" asked Mrs. De Camp.

"Before another sun comes and goes they will all be killed. Very quick the settlers at Lake Shetek and those on the Red River will be killed. Fort Abercrombie will be burned. No white folks will be left in Minnesota."

With that dismal prophecy he went out and closed the door.

Shanty Mose slipped down the ladder and asked of Mrs. De Camp:

"What did he say about killing at the upper agency? I caught only part of it."

She explained. Mose turned to Murray and quietly informed him:

"Your place is here. I'm going to make a try for the Yellow Medicine. I've tried once to carry a warning. I failed. This time I'll get ahead of the Indians or lose my scalp."

"You'll be killed," Murray told him in a weak voice.

"Mebbe. If I can't take word through once out of two tries I oughter be killed."

Murray turned to Mrs. De Camp, his eyes asking her to speak.

"He must try," she calmly said. "But not now. Later. How's the Anderson girl?"

"Ain't suffering any. Worse sign than if she was." He shook his head expressively, and with a sidelong glance at the children he whispered, "I think she's dying. I ain't told her friends. And they're beginning to feel faint. Murray, they ought to have something to eat."

"I'll try to find something," Murray promptly offered. "I'll fetch back something."

Closing the door behind him, he advanced toward a cluster of fires where the squaws were busy over the kettles. He endeavored to keep in the light rather than in the shadows and forced himself to walk boldly up to a group of screaming, quarreling squaws. They had turned from their cooking to fight over a pile of dress goods looted from some store. Bolts of cloth, hacked into pieces, told of their attempts to divide the spoils.

At the next fire an orator was loudly haranguing the fighting men, making them rare promises and declaring that a few more days would see no white folk west of the mighty river. In a few days of brave efforts all white lands and goods and traders' stores would be the property of the Minnesota Dakotas.

Minneapolis and all lesser communities were to be destroyed and sacked. After all this had been accomplished they would let the Grandfather at Washington—if he be alive—send them a peace pipe and many presents. But not until after they had grown weary of killing and had finished the looting would they listen to the Grandfather. Then they would all take new names and for all time hold their lands.

This idyllic picture was greeted with frenzied endorsement. After the clamor had abated the speaker announced that Fort Ridgely would be stormed and burned on the next day.

Because of his fresh coat of war paint Murray might not have recognized the speaker had it not been for the wristbands of skunkskin. Little Crow, one of the first advocates for the sale of the Minnesota lands to the whites, had come back to full favor.

MURRAY found an empty kettle and, advancing to the fire, began filling it from the kettle of boiling corn. The squaws glared at him malevolently, but the firelight shone brightly on the stuffed crowskin. Either respect for the crowskin or the squaws' fear that they would lose their share of the dress goods permitted Murray to complete his errand uninterrupted. On returning to the house he met several small groups of Indians, who eyed him sullenly but did not offer to harm him.

Entering the house, he told Mrs. De Camp:

"Only green corn. Another time I'll try for some meat."

"This is enough," she assured him. "Call your friend and have him take some up to the girls."

Murray climbed the ladder and softly spoke Mose's name. The trap door was opened, and Elizabeth Potter told him:

"He's gone. Slipped through the little window and dropped to the ground. I fear he has been killed. I heard a choking sound. We tried to keep him here."

Greatly alarmed, Murray descended, intending to go outside and investigate. Before he could open the door a shrill cry outside halted him. Mrs. De Camp whispered—

"They've found something."

"It's my friend, Shanty Mose," groaned Murray.

"It can't be—" she began.

"He's gone. Dropped from the window. Elizabeth Potter heard him trying to cry out."

"But the Indians are angry about something," she persisted.

Other cries now sounded at the end of the house. She raised a finger for silence. What was first a cry of discovery was now increased to a savage chorus of howls.

"Know nothing about your friend's going away," she cautioned. "You have just returned with the corn."

A strong voice at the door quieted much of the shouting. Then the door opened and Little Crow entered. Warriors filled the doorway behind him, and several of his friends advanced across the threshold. The chief was wearing new thigh leggings, nearly white in color and heavily fringed. One half his face was painted in stripes. The other half was covered with little circles which interlinked and formed a chain pattern.

Ignoring the woman, he stared intently at Murray and in English demanded—"Did the young man kill a Dakota man while wearing the crow of Chetan Wakan Mani?"

"I have killed no Dakota man," replied Murray, his heart pounding violently.

"They say you are strong in the hands. They say you made the black man drop his knife. They say you can squeeze the life from a man's throat," said the chief.

"I have not placed my hand on a Dakota man. I stopped the black man from killing the white women. It was the crow medicine that made my hands strong."

A voice from outside cried:

"The wearer of the crow carried a kettle of corn to this house from the squaws' cooking fire. He could not kill a Dakota with his bare hands without spilling some of the corn."

This was spoken in the Indian tongue.

Another man called out:

"Running Dog saw the white man walking with the kettle. He did not stop. Running Dog saw him go into the house."

Murray did not know he had been fully exonerated until Mrs. De Camp nodded reassuringly and Little Crow asked:

"Where is the other white man? The man with hair on his face?"

This was spoken in English; and, mindful of the woman's warning, Murray replied:

"He's in the loft. I'll call him."

Wherewith he placed a foot on the lower rung and called out:

"Ho, Shanty Mose! Come down here."

For a few moments there was no reply; then the Potter girl raised the trap door a bit and whispered down to Murray—

"Shall I say he has gone?"

If Mose had killed an Indian in escaping from the house it was well that he should secure a lead before being pursued. Murray was hesitating, trying to evolve some plan which would conceal his friend's flight for a few minutes more, when Little Crow became suspicious, glided to the ladder and quickly mounted until his head was through the opening. He glared about the loft for a few seconds, then descended.

"The white man is not there," he told Murray. "The young man knew he had gone. Medicine grows weak when working for a man with a crooked tongue."

Turning to the waiting group in and beyond the doorway, he commanded:

"Let men whose eyes are not spoiled by whisky look around the village and outside on the road to New Ulm. Let others take their ponies and ride up and down the river The white man with hair on his face has run away. He is very strong in his hands.

"Swift Walker, one of Wapasha's young men, tried to stop him. You saw what he did to Swift Walker's throat. He must be found and brought back. Bring him back alive if he doesn't fight too hard. Bring him back dead if he makes a hard fight."

He glided from the room without again glancing at the prisoners. A dozen Indians outside the door, being sober enough to scout intelligently, scattered on the run to search the outskirts of the village, or to mount and scour the river road in both directions. But by the time the pursuit was commenced the killer was two miles away, riding up the river on a murdered settler's horse.

THE horse Shanty Mose had appropriated proved to be an excellent one, superior in speed and stamina to the Indian pony. The way was dark, but the horse kept to the road at a smashing gallop, the rider making but little effort to guide him. Three times inside the first few miles Mose was challenged in the Indian tongue by a blurred form. One mounted brave started to pursue him, but gave it up either from disinclination or because his pony was no match for the horse.

At the end of ten miles Mose reined in at a walk, his mount well winded. As he was passing by a thick growth on his right a pony darted from the river bank and ranged alongside. The rider leaned from his saddle and in the Santee dialect asked—

"Did they kill all the whites at the Redwood agency?"

Shanty Mose swept a muscular arm around the copper neck and with a heave of his powerful shoulders dragged the man across his horse, caught and held him by the throat for half a minute. Then, hurling the inanimate figure clear of the road, he shifted to the pony's back and kicked him into a gallop. The horse followed for some distance.

The race against time was being renewed at the top of the pony's speed. It lacked an hour of midnight when Mose dismounted from the exhausted animal and ran toward the light showing in the agency office.

The door was open, and several Indians were gathered a short distance from it, telling one another in whispers what they had heard about the killings down the river Mose broke through the group and entered the office. Galbraith at that moment was being sought by messengers from St. Peter, where he had slept Sunday night before renewing his journey to Fort Snelling. News of the massacre reached St. Peter about the time Shanty Mose escaped from the Indian village. But news of the killings had been slow in creeping up the river to the upper agency. Those Indians who knew about it remained silent. The few whites at and around the agency were ignorant of what had happened.

When Shanty Mose made his precipitate entrance one of Galbraith's subordinates was asleep with his head resting on a table. Before him was a bottle of whisky. With their chairs tipped back against the wall were the Pollacker boys, their hired man Phil White and Abner Page.

"What the ——!" exclaimed Ed Pollacker, removing his pipe and staring in surprize at the newcomer. Recognizing him, he grinned and greeted:

"If it ain't our little truthful Mose! Have a drink, old logger."

Before any of the others could speak Mose was sharply announcing:

"Devil's been well served this day. Injuns burned and looted the lower agency."

"You're crazy," growled Bert Pollacker. "Keep your lies to the north woods."

"You're a fool, Bert Pollacker," hotly replied Mose. "I've come desperate hard to warn the folks up here."

"You mean some of the Sioux got drunk and made a fuss," sneered Page.

Yet he was the only one of the four to allow his chair to rest squarely on its four legs. And he put up his pipe.

"Drunk and hooted a bit," said Bert. "Take your coat off and cool down, Mose."

"I know what I'm talking about," declared Mose, lowering his voice. "They'll be here before morning. They began killing yesterday in the Big Woods. Mad Martha, Papa Baptiste and I saw them murder Jones the trader, Howard Baker, a Wisconsin homesteader and a woman. They killed another woman, a young one, at the Jones place. I was caught while trying to carry the word to the lower agency. I tell you they burned and killed. I escaped from one of their villages.

"I tell you they've got Murray Fall a

ier. He's safe along of wearing a crow- m. They've got Mrs. De Camp, the mill man's wife, and her children. They've got a Potter girl from Martin County, and three young girls caught at the Reynolds place. They've got——"

"——! That's enough!" shouted Ed Pollacker, shaking the clerk and arousing him from his slumbers.

White rose and mechanically fingered the handle of a belt gun; then declared: "That's bad; but the worst is over. It won't spread. By this time they've learned the summer money is really coming and will be here within two days at the outside. This time we know the money's coming."

"If any one's been killed we can blame the —— fools who seized the money without authority and used it in satisfying some more of the traders' —— claims!" hotly denounced Ed Pollacker.

"Sioux won't mind that so long as more gold has been scraped together," moodily remarked Page.

"I tell you the traders have been paid with lead and knives!" angrily insisted Mose. "Women and little children have been killed. I spoiled two horses getting here. Murray Fall, a prisoner, saw the first of the killing. Myrick's dead. Lynde's dead. Myrick's clerk, Divoll, is dead. Soldiers from Ridgely were killed at the ferry."

Page came to his feet and harshly cried:

"If the old fool isn't making up lies those Indians at the door were staying up late to talk this business over. We may have to do some fighting, Bert, before I can take up with your offer."

"I'll question the Indians," offered Phil White.

But when he went to the door there was not an Indian to be seen.

The clerk, now fully awake and much frightened, collected his wits and informed them:

"John Otherday, a friendly, sent word to Mrs. Galbraith about half past nine this evening. Sent word for her to leave the agency at once. She told me about it, and I told her it was all nonsense. I must find her. Will Quinn's away at Shakopee, and there's his wife and children. I'll be moving around and passing the word. But there's enough farmer Indians up here to stop any mischief."

"Fine time to be telling us what John Otherday did," growled Bert Pollacker. "Give us the facts quickly, Mose. Abn is going to quit the Falls and work for Ed 'n' me."

Mose began a detailed statement of what he had seen, beginning with the murders in the Acton woods. When he had finished the four men rose and adjusted their belts. Phil White spoke for all when he quietly declared:

"Boys, the real thing's busted loose. No bluff this time."

"And to think it wouldn't have happened if the money had been allowed to come through! Or if the Sioux had held back for two days longer!" bitterly remarked Bert Pollacker.

"To —— with the money!" cried Ed. "We'll ride down the river and show them some real fighting. We'll stop the cusses from bringing any fight up here. This place is safe until they've burned Fort Ridgely and New Ulm. If Little Crow is in this——"

"——, man! I've told you he's leading them!" exploded Shanty Mose. "They've even dragged in Wapasha, Wacouta and Big Eagle and other leaders who are friendly to the whites."

"Even so, the fighting will be near the towns. They'll figger they can take this place any time they want to," spoke up Bert. "Help the clerk spread the word, boys, and we'll light out. Pick up a horse somewheres, Mose."

"I'll look after myself. Have for quite a spell tonight. Killed two Injuns getting here. Always looked after myself in the timber country," Mose growled.

When the five men left the agent's office they came to a dozen Sioux a short distance from the door. They considered it significant that these men were slow in getting out of the way.

"You Sisseton men are losing your sleep," sharply remarked Abner Page.

"One of our men has had a dream. He asks us to tell him what it means," one of the men replied.

"My medicine is very strong. I can tell the dream," said Page.

The group was silent for a moment; then the Sisseton man replied:

"Our brother dreamed of a red sky. It was night. The sky was red. There was no grass fire, no camp-fire. The sky was red."

"It is a bad dream for a Sisseton man to have. A bad dream for his brothers to have. The sky he saw was red with the blood of Dakota men who have listened to an evil ghost."

The Indians abruptly walked away. Phil White remarked—

"Didn't know you could talk their lingo, Abner."

"Picked up some of it in my wanderings. They've heard about the massacre. They're waiting till the fight comes up this way; then they'll join in. The clerk seems to be arousing every one here. White men should be blocking the road between here and the Redwood. Get a horse, Mose."

"Go on. I'm going to ride to Dr. Williamson's mission at Pajutazee."

"A round ten miles out and back," mused White.

"I ain't worrying about my own hide," grumbled Mose. "Then there's Cunningham's Injun boarding school and Dr. Riggs' place two miles beyond Williamson's. That'll be my stent. You folks pass the word to the few whites hereabouts and along the river road."

He left them and ran back of Forbes' store, managed by William Quinn. He passed the clerk, who was driving a cart. He paused to hear the clerk explain:

"Can't make out if it's worth while, or just a lot of nonsense. But there's sixty odd of us going to pull out with John Otherday to guide us. What don't look right to me is the Indian's plan to strike across the river and into the woods and make for Shakopee instead of going down to Fort Ridgely. And he's sent word he won't travel with us, but ahead and in sight. If there's anything in what you've told it looks like he was leading us into a trap."

"You're a fool!" snapped Mose. "Otherday is honest. He knew what's coming. If he blatted it out he'd got himself killed. The whites wouldn't believe him. He knows Little Crow will attack Ridgely; that to make for the fort will take you plump into the Indian lines. He's taking you outside the fighting."

He continued his quest for a horse and was giving up in despair when he came to some ponies on the edge of the agency grounds. He knew these had been left by the Sisseton men. Selecting one at random, he started for Pajutazee to warn the Rev. Thomas S. Williamson, who had long carried on his work among the Sioux and who was the first teacher to go to the Wahpeton band.

Mose found the mission building lighted and several Indians whispering outside the door. Without dismounting he called for Dr. Williamson to step outside. The missionary appeared and Mose briefly gave warning.

"I've been a long time with the Dakotas. I can't believe that they will harm me or Mrs. Williamson," said the missionary.

"They've killed several traders, many men and women and children. They've killed Philander Prescott and cut off his head. He lived among them since 1820, married a Dakota woman and had a large family."

"Prescott dead! Killed!" exclaimed the missionary. "Why, we supposed he had more influence over them than any other white man. I'll send the children away, and my wife if she'll go. But it'll look bad for my work if I act afraid. I have tried to teach them the meaning of faith. I must live it. And I'm sure they won't harm me. If I would countenance it, all here at the mission would shed blood to defend me."

Mose parted his lips in a snarl and growled:

"Devoted to you, eh? There's one in there that's heard Little Crow is coming; and she can't wait."

And he pointed to the lighted window.

A squaw was rummaging through a chest of drawers, taking what caught her fancy. Williamson, knowing the Indian nature as well perhaps as any white man could learn it, looked very grave.

"It's more serious than I had supposed," he admitted. "I've been hearing odds and ends of what I believed to be gossip for more than an hour."

"Clear out while you can. I'm riding on to Riggs' place."

"You've done your share. I'll send word at once to Cunningham and Riggs. Poor, misled creatures! What a price they will have to pay!"

They shook hands, and Mose turned back.

Not relishing the chance of running into the Sisseton men from whom he had stolen the pony, he skirted the agency grounds and kept clear of the road for several miles down the river. When his pony began to show signs of weakening he found a hiding place in a clump of timber and slept for several hours.

The sun was not up when he was aroused by the sounds of shots, the rapid discharges of a six shooter, followed by yells of rage. He caught the hoarse voice of a white man barking defiance. Far down the road he glimpsed a horseman riding at a gallop and turning to fire at a string of horsemen as he rode.

His sympathies were with the fugitive, and he fumbled his empty belt and glanced impotently at his pony. Even had he been armed he could not have done more than to die with the man, for the pursuers were closing in. The white man's mount staggered and limped, then with a final effort carried his rider behind a stretch of bush growth and out of Mose's sight. The savages screeching in exultation swept behind the bushes.

Mose looked for the man to reappear in the opening nearly abreast of his hiding place. He was startled to see the bushes violently agitated and the man reappear into the open on foot. Then the six shooter was rapidly emptied, and a crashing volley of rifles and shotguns in the road literally shot the man almost in two. Sick at heart, Mose held the nose of his pony and watched the Sioux break through the bushes and drag their victim back to the road and out of sight. There followed much whooping and yelling.

"Thank God they didn't take him alive!" whispered Mose. "And I ain't got even a rock to make a fight with!"

Other Indians kept coming up the road to vanish behind the bush-growth. At last the band remounted and rode into view up the road. Mose estimated that there were three hundred of them. They were hastening to carry torture and death to the Yellow Medicine agency. Several were waving scalps, many were crazed from drinking.

Mose waited until the last of the stragglers had disappeared up the road; then he mounted and rode through the bushes in search of the unfortunate. The man was leaning against a willow tree. He was dead and scalped; and yet he stood upright, his head sagging on his shattered chest. Looking more closely, Mose discovered that the body was held in place by wagon-bolts riveting it to the tree trunk. Had Abner Page or Peter Clush or Murray Fall been present either would have identified the victim as Mart, the horse-thief, alias "Oaks."

"The terrible devils!" whispered Mose as he quit the road and rode south.

Inside of a mile he was chased by two Indians, who left the road to run him down. But either his lead discouraged them or the clouds of smoke in the west invited them, for they soon abandoned the pursuit and turned back to participate in the looting of the upper agency.

CHAPTER VIII

FLIGHT

AFTER the search for Mose had proven futile, as confessed by Wapasha through the window to Mrs. De Camp, the latter drew Murray aside from the sleeping children and whispered:

"You can get away. It will be easier for you than for your friend. He had to fight. No one will harm you. Perhaps you can reach Fort Ridgely or New Ulm and bring help."

"But I mustn't leave you and the girls."

"We will be taken to a big camp. The Andrews girl is past helping. The rest of us will be safe. The Indians are beginning to remember that prisoners are valuable when they come to make peace. Several of their leaders will help us. We can count on Wapasha, Wacouta and Big Eagle. Mankato and Little Six, not even Little Crow, can harm us. We're not their prisoners. You can help us most by going."

Murray stepped to the door and opened it a bit. There appeared to be no guards around the house. Many of the Indians were sleeping off their debauch on agency alcohol. Others were writhing in pain from the medicinal stores they had sampled. Those capable of pursuit were eagerly listening to an orator holding forth by a central fire, who was urging an immediate attack on the upper agency, or Fort Ridgely. The leaders were not agreed on the next objective: some were for plundering the upper agency forthwith; some insisted it should be left alone until Fort Ridgely and New Ulm were taken.

When the orator had finished Little Crow suddenly took his place and said:

"The strong house at the Yellow Medicine agency must be burned. They are brick houses, and the soldiers will come and use them for forts."

Murray closed the door and softly told Mrs. De Camp:

"It looks easy for me to leave. But I can't leave you women."

"I tell you Wapasha and several other leaders will help us. You must go. Only the Potter girl is able to travel. The Swandt and Williams girls are too frightened. But you can try them. I believe you can get away with the Potter girl while the Indians are arguing. Either of the others would be a hindrance."

Murray climbed the ladder and rapped on the trap door. Elizabeth Potter opened it. The Swandt girl and Mattie Williams were seated by the unconscious Anderson girl, their arms about each other. Murray briefly repeated Mrs. De Camp's advice and concluded by saying:

"I believe I can get you girls to the fort, or to New Ulm. We will have the night to travel in and can hide during the day. It's an awful responsibility for me to suggest it. Mrs. De Camp says I must try for the fort or the town. But she also thinks you all will be safe here."

"One can stay with Mary. There's nothing to be done for her as she's mortal hurt. I'll stay with her, and the others shall go with you. Mrs. De Camp has her children to look after. Wait."

She crawled to her companions and talked rapidly. The Swandt girl wept and continually shook her head, shrinking in horror from the suggestion of stealing away through the night. Mattie Williams, more composed, decided:

"I won't risk it. I ran once when Mary was hurt. Mrs. De Camp has saved us from them when they were at their worst. It's safer to stay here. I won't go."

The Potter girl talked further, but met with refusals. Picking up her little bonnet, she tied the bands of lutestring under her chin, returned to Murray and reported:

"They won't risk it. But I will. I think they'll be safe here and in the big camp they're to be taken to. But I'll take the chance with you. You must go anyway, and I can do no good here. I'd rather die than stay. Let's start."

Murray told her she must wait while he reconnoitered. Descending the ladder, he helped Mrs. De Camp carry the sleeping children to the loft and took up the second pail of water and what was left of the green corn. Then he slipped from the door and walked around the house. He found no sentinels.

He ventured farther and found a large number of ponies and farmers' horses herded on the south side of the village. He approached these and stumbled over two guards unconscious from drink.

Orators were still adressing a large audience around the central, or council, fire. As soon as one man had delivered his opinion another would take his place. Flushed with their success at the agency and lusting for more killings and looting, the fighting men were demanding immediate action, but the difference of opinion as to the next move was not smoothed out. Little Crow was accepted as the supreme leader, but this did not mean that men and chiefs must bow to his will. Much of the talk had to be repeated as men from bands who had held back from the initial massacre kept coming in and declaring their desire to participate in the war and share in the plunder. Whereas their leaders had sought to keep them out of the fighting those leaders now were irresistibly swept into the war.

Under cover of the confusion and wrangling Murray returned to the house unnoticed and tossed a handful of dirt into the small loft window. The Potter girl at once called down to him. He directed her to descend and wait at the door.

Once again he circled the house. Returning to the door, he took her hand and swiftly led her toward the horses. Halting a short distance from the animals, he whispered for her to lie down by a clump of bushes. Then he boldly advanced and pulled up two picket pins, the first he came to, and led the horses to where the girl was hidden.

She came to her feet, and he directed her to lead her horse until he gave the word to mount.

"If any of the Sioux show up drop to the ground and let the horse go. They'll think they pulled their pins and strayed," he whispered as he took the lead.

Not until nearly two miles from the village did he dare give the word to mount. They were south of the road, and the girl became impatient as Murray insisted on riding slowly. They felt their way through the darkness until the east began to lighten. Then Murray dismounted and his companion did likewise without being told.

"I'd hoped to find a hiding place," he muttered. "This is too open. It's dangerous."

"We can turn the horses loose and hide in the grass," the girl suggested.

"We must keep the horses. We must have water and something to eat," he told her.

"We can go without water for a day or two, and I don't feel as if I could ever eat again. If we can't hide here we can ride for it."

He swept his gaze around the dim skyline, searching for timber. There was a scattered growth along the river in the north, but he dared not venture near the road. Undulating grass was all he beheld except for the uprights of a scaffold on a low ridge directly south of their position.

"You're not scared of dead Indians?" he suddenly asked.

"Never of dead ones," she muttered.

"Come."

And without mounting he walked rapidly toward the burial platform. It was on the open prairie and the sun was not yet up when he halted beside it.

"If we hide on the platform we must leave the horses to wander," she reminded him. "If they stay here feeding they may draw the Indians to us."

"That's the —— of it!" he muttered. "Wait a bit."

He shinned up an upright and gained the platform. There was but one occupant, and he must have been a man of importance in his lifetime, as his mummified form was encased in richly decorated blankets and a war pipe was at his side, its embellishments showing that he had carried the pipe four times.

Murray had intended to bundle the silent tenant to the ground, but the dozen feet of elevation permitted him to discern a small house in a grassy hollow some distance in the south. A black gap told him that the door was open and the place deserted. Back of it was a fringe of trees. He immediately changed his plans.

Sliding down a pole, he informed the girl:

"An empty house south of us. Probably belonged to a farmer Indian, and yet it may be off the reservation. There's trees, and they mean water. We'll look at it."

Without a word, yet inwardly glad that she was not to utilize the platform for a hiding place, she followed him. The grass was tall, and their progress was slow. He was a rod ahead of the girl; and it was his horse, attempting to break loose, that gave him the warning.

He halted and quieted the animal and stared about to locate the danger spot. He could discover nothing. There was no sign of life along the horizon nor in the grass close at hand. When he attempted to advance the horse shied and tried to bolt.

"It's something in the grass straight ahead," she whispered.

He had given the knife, taken from Godfrey, to Mrs. De Camp, and was without the simpliest of weapons.

"Hold the nag," he whispered, as if fearing the reddening horizon had hostile ears.

Then, feeling more nervous than when he hunted Pollacker's bull in the tall grass, he walked ahead. Each second he expected to behold a Sioux springing to his feet to complete the ambuscade.

BUT the cause of the horse's fright would never harm white nor red man. A white man, dead, lay on his face. At first Murray thought the whole top of his scalp had been removed, then saw the man was bald-headed. The stiff side whiskers reminded him of Shanty Mose. The man had been shot twice. There were marks of shod hoofs around the spot.

A Maynard military carbine was protruding from under the body. As Murray extracted this he discovered a navy Colt in a belt. The revolver was loaded. Searching farther, Murray found a bag of brass cartridges in the grass.

He quickly reconstructed the tragedy. The man had had a running fight and although mortally wounded had managed to ride clear of his pursuers. Unseen by the Sioux, he had dropped dead from his horse while attempting to reload the carbine.

"What is it?" softly asked the girl.

With a surge of courage such as he had not felt since being made a captive Murray told her:

"A mighty fine gun for me and a revolver for you. Lead the horses around me."

"Some one has been killed?"

"Shot. Not scalped. He had life enough to outrun them."

He permitted her to lead both animals while he studied the gun and the ammunition. Besides the brass cartridges with rimmed heads there was a quantity of caps.

The cartridges did not contain the primer. The flash entered through a tiny hole in the center of the head.

For a few minutes Murray nearly forgot their peril in studying out what was a new gun to him. Then he tipped up the barrel, inserted a cartridge and placed a cap.

"They never rode after him or they'd have seen him drop and have taken his scalp and this gun," he explained as he took over his horse and led the way to the house.

"Give me the revolver, please," she reminded him.

"Can you shoot one?"

"I can at least shoot myself if it's necessary," she replied in a low, determined voice.

"Lord! But you've got all sorts of courage, Miss Elizabeth!" he involuntarily complimented her.

In a vague fashion he was trying to reconcile the dainty bonnet and pretty dress with such a resolute spirit.

"There's times when it isn't a bit hard to die," she muttered. "I think I'd rather die than to see again what I've already seen, even if no harm could come to me."

He feared she was about to break down under the strain, but a glance at the frowning face, very pale in the early light, told him she would not weaken even though their path led them to and through the gates of death.

He gave her the heavy revolver and halted a short distance from the house.

"I'm sure it's empty," he told her; "but you'd better mount and be ready to ride if a Sioux should happen to be hiding and waiting inside."

"Go ahead! Be careful!" she told him in a jerky voice.

But when he reached the door and glanced back he found she had drawn close and was holding the revolver in two hands and covering the one window.

With the carbine ready he stepped into the darkened room. Nothing alive was there. Then he stared sharply into the dark corners, fearing to find new horrors.

With a deep breath of relief he found no appearance of the house having been occupied for a long time. There were no furnishings. The roof was partly broken and sagged low at the back end. The door hung by one leather hinge.

Murray's expression was rather dubious as he stepped to the door.

"Don't know as it's any better than the open," he reported.

"There's something in the willows. Maybe a cornhouse," she told him. "Best take a look at that."

He had not noticed the low, squat structure, almost concealed by the drooping branches. He ran to it and soon had investigated it. When he came back he said:

"It's queer. It's a horse shed, and it's been used often and recently. In rainy weather there's a bit of creek that furnishes water. Dry now."

"Then the house has been used," she quickly insisted. "Let's put the horses in the shed and look closer inside the house."

They secured the horses under cover and returned to the ruin of a house. If men halted long enough to put up their horses they must have used the house or slept in the open. Neither of the refugees believed the latter. And yet there was not a single cooking utensil except an ancient frying pan heavily coated with rust. Nor were there blankets, nor broken bits of food.

"I give it up," surrendered Murray. "Several men have been here lately, coming separately or together. They stayed long enough to house their horses, but there isn't even any crumbs or fresh ashes in the fireplace to show they took to shelter themselves."

The girl's gaze wandered to the fireplace as he spoke; then became fixed on the rough slab floor in front of the hearth. She pointed and said—

"Try to lift that short piece of board."

"But there's no cellar," he told her. "Look through any of these holes. Ground a few inches underneath."

And he indicated several places where the slabs had rotted away or had been broken through.

"That patch of floor looks different," she insisted. "Looks newer."

Murray agreed to this. He requested her to watch for Indians from the window, and while she did so he managed to work a short slab loose. As he removed it he was surprized to find a black hole.

Thrusting down his arm, his fingers found the handle of a jug. Feeling about, he found other jugs. All were filled. Further investigation soon revealed that the cavity extended into the chimney foundation. Practically under the hearthstone was a large keg.

"I smell whisky!" cried the girl at the window, but without turning her head.

"It's here; lots of it," said Murray. And he rose and restored the slab. "Some smuggler has used this place for hiding rum. It's handy to the reservation. The smuggler takes pains not to cook or eat in here. He wants the place to look as it does, deserted for a long time."

"That's very wrong," she bitterly condemned. "I saw Sioux under the influence of whisky yesterday."

Murray sighed. His liking for the Pollacker boys kept him loyal, and he would mention no names. He was confident, however, that this empty shell, like the sod house on Lake Hanska, was one of several whisky caches used by his friends and neighbors in their nefarious trade with the Sioux.

"We must have something to eat. I'll try for some prairie chickens," he offered.

"Don't fire the gun!" she cried. "Even if you killed them without noise we couldn't cook them without making a smoke. Even if they were cooked and the table was set I couldn't eat."

They crouched on the broken floor, the girl watching at the window while Murray peered from the door. There was nothing to see except the ocean of tall grass, dotted far off with islets of trees. The wind in gusts agitated the surface in patches and suggested the swirl of some marine monster about to break water. Birds circled and dipped.

The staccato *tat-tat-tat* of a woodpecker exploring the roof gave them a second of rare fright, so unexpectedly did the driller break the silence. A red-tailed hawk swept down to the door in pursuit of a victim. Overhead, as oblivious of the carnage and suffering below as if dwelling in the fourth dimension, winged wild pigeons, intercepting the sunlight and shadowing the grass.

In the north, near the river, smoke was besmirching the heavens. Northwest and east of the deserted house pencils of black and brown told of solitary houses burning. In the direction of the lower agency there was considerable smoke. Murray declared he could see smoke in the direction of the Yellow Medicine.

The girl remarked, as if telling something to herself—

"They are killing everywhere."

"The soldiers will come. They will give them their come-uppance," Murray encouraged her.

"When will they come? Come from where?"

He could not tell her. The white man's war had stripped the State of fighting men. The call for more troops was taking even the mixed bloods from the reservation. The few companies remaining in the State, awaiting transportation down the Mississippi, were poorly armed and unless border bred no match for the Sioux. After a long interval of silence the girl reminded him:

"Even if soldiers could come today they couldn't save the people killed yesterday." Then she asked, "Why did the Indians do it?"

Murray tried to explain as a possible cause the failure of the summer money to arrive and the Indians' belief that the time was ripe to get back their ancient holdings. He discovered she was not listening.

THE day was interminably slow in wearing itself out. The dull waiting got on Murray's nerves. He was eager to risk a dash for New Ulm, but would not shoulder the responsibility of urging it. Had he been alone he would not have remained in the old house.

He believed he was keeping a sharp watch for hostiles; but his mind was running after the Pollacker boys and their illicit traffic or was penetrating south to his father and mother and little sister and the Crays. At least he could be thankful that the Blue Earth County people were remote from the danger.

"Why don't you try to sleep?" he abruptly asked the girl.

"Come here. Something is moving in the grass," she startled him by warning. "I saw something round moving over the top of the grass."

Clutching his rifle and gripping a cartridge between his teeth, Murray gained her side.

"Probably a hawk, hunting," he muttered. "I see nothing."

"Now! See it!"

And she pointed a finger while her free hand closed around the handle of the revolver.

Murray located it, a round object moving along the surface of the grassy sea.

"It's a man, riding south," he whispered, allowing the cartridge to fall into his hand.

"Sioux?"

"He rides alone. Must be a white man."

"Shall we ride after and catch up with him?"

"Wait. He may be riding from something that follows close."

"There's no one following him. I must get home. My folks will be sick with worry. Our horses are rested. We can overtake him. He will have a gun. The Sioux won't leave the river to chase one man, or two," she insisted, her voice sounding querulous for the first time since they entered on their dangerous adventure.

"Wait! He rides slowly. His horse is played out. If we join him we must hold back."

"That's selfish. His horse would soon get rested."

"Back there! Do you see something?"

His voice was choked. He was panting with excitement.

She shaded her eyes and stared in silence for thirty seconds: then whispered:

"Like a string of beads. Dots above the grass."

Murray cupped his ear to listen. A faint, ululating cry came over the tall grass—the hunting call of the Sioux when man is the quarry. The isolated dot in the lead, now nearly due west from the house and going south, seemed to be making poor progress. They saw a patch of black smoke lazily float up from him and then heard the dull *boom* of a gun.

"God!" gasped Murray.

A grassy ridge hid the pursued from view, nor did they glimpse him again. But for some minutes the string of dots were to be seen; then one by one dipping into a hollow, the pursuers vanished. The booming of the white man's gun sounded twice before there came a new note. Murray whispered:

"Closing in on him! Shotguns. Two barrels at a time."

There was no more shooting, and Murray was sick at heart.

"He's got away!" whispered the girl.

He nodded. He knew how the lone rider had escaped; and he hoped several of the Sioux had gone first over the long trail.

There came another tense period of waiting; then the heads of the Indians reappeared. This time they were considerably nearer the house. There were five of them. The girl had counted seven when they dipped down the western skyline. As they topped a low ridge abreast the front of the house the hidden watchers glimpsed two ponies carrying dead men.

"They paid a good price," Murray murmured.

"But he got away?" she faintly repeated.

"Yes. He got away. He's far from here by now."

They crouched low against the wall, no longer daring to steal glances through the doorway. They depended upon their ears until Murray knew that the men had passed on or were very close. Then he ventured to peep out.

"Thank God! They've gone by!" he hoarsely exclaimed.

The Sioux had given no heed to the ruin of a house and seemed anxious to regain the river where the killing would be easier and less dangerous. The girl was now impatient to leave the place. Murray was as eager as she; but the tragedy enacted in the grass and almost under their eyes warned him that their world was not so empty as they had supposed.

"We'll wait till the sun is lower," he said.

"Waiting will kill me!" she cried. "I feel choked all over. This is as bad as the loft in the Indian village."

"It's dull work, but I believe it's safer," he persisted, feeling quite helpless under her insistence.

"But you should not be afraid if I'm willing to risk it," she retorted.

His face colored, and he angrily told her:

"You forget. There's no danger for me so long as I wear the crow. You pin it on your dress and promise to keep it there if we meet Sioux and I'll start now."

She was silent for a bit, then quietly answered.

"I'll not wear the crow-skin. I didn't mean what my foolish words seemed to mean. There's no doubt about your courage. We'll stay as long as you think best. It was the sight of that man, riding alone. If he got away when chased I thought we could get clear when no Indians are following us."

"Possibly," he admitted. "But we might not be as lucky as that man."

He turned his attention to watching patches of cloud-shadow darken the grass. Thundercaps in the north told of a storm over the Minnesota. Murray hoped it would rain heavily. He was suddenly conscious of the girl pressing close to him. Her face was wan with fear.

"What's the matter?" he whispered, cocking the rifle.

"Lightning. I'm afraid of it," she confessed.

He stared at her in amazement. She had shown no fright when in the Indian village nor during the flight. The passing of the Sioux warriors had not disturbed her composure. Yet she was afraid of a bank of sullen clouds several miles in the north. Had the situation not been so ominous he would have greatly offended her by laughing

"Stay here by the door. You'll see only the sunlight. I'll go to the window. The storm will stick to the river. I wish it might sweep over us, but it won't. And we must keep watch in at least two directions."

He left her; but before taking his station by the window he went to the end of the house and found a window boarded up. Finding a peep-hole, he examined the country to the east.

"Why do you stay back there? I can hardly see you," she complained.

He made a hissing noise as a signal for her to be silent. Instantly the fear of the storm vanished and she was gliding to his side, the revolver held ready for use. There was no tremor in her voice as she softly inquired—

"Has it come?"

"Something comes along the ridge from the east. I can't make it out. It may be a stray horse. Now we'll shift to the window. We can see better from there."

Once they changed their position the girl caught sight of something bobbing and disappearing. Murray's eyes failed to locate it. He stepped to the fireplace and crawled up a shoulder of the rough masonry until his line of vision was through the top of the window. This slight elevation permitted him to call out in a low voice:

"Horses. Two of them. Man walking and leading them. Coming straight down the slope. Be here in a minute. Don't shoot unless you can kill. There's only two of them."

He regained the floor, crossed to the window, slid the barrel of the carbine over the sill and placed an extra cartridge on the floor by his left hand and slipped a cap between his lips.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE PONY EXPRESS OF THE SKY

by Will Chamberlain

OH, OUT of the stillness a shadow,
And out of the spaces a whir,
A spreading, a flashing of pinions,
Where the eagle was master, a stir—
Lo, the world crawls below, plain and prairie,
Clear the track, O ye hawks soaring high!
For the mail of a country is passing—
I'm the pony express of the sky.

There, once went the pathfinders—Frémont,
Pierre Dorian, Lewis and Clarke.
They journeyed like worms, toiled and sweated—
Behold me, as free as the lark.
I may be the plaything of lightnings,
But back of the thrill is the bless.
Mine's the line where the stars blink and wonder,
The buzzing, cloud-scaling express.

Down there creeps the pale Mississippi,
And yon the Missouri leaps forth.
Proud Harney to me is a molehill,
Pike's Peak a mere wrinkle of earth.
With the winds and the rainsheets I fellow,
On the tempests my muscles I try;
I'm the mission-sped bird of a nation,
The pony express of the sky.

To your throne, God, I climb to pay honor;
I've the soul of a soldier and nun;
For unselfish triumph is worship
Of You—may your purpose be done.
I laugh with the rose of the morning,
And the vespers of evening cry—
Look up, O ye mortals! I'm passing,
The pony express of the sky.

The Trail Smellers

by GORDON MacCREAGH

Author of "The Inca's Ransom," "Mamu, the Soothsayer," etc.

WILL I undertake a small freight for the senhores? *Como não?* Why not? Freighting is my business, and I, Theophilo Da Costa, will undertake to deliver a freight to any place in all Amazonas—provided the price is right; and the price is dependent upon the distance and the danger involved.

Up the Rio Içá into the Putumayo country? Oho! Into that disputed country of no man where the boundaries are indefinite, claimed by Ecuador and Colombia and Peru and our own Brazil; and where, while international boundary commissioners haggle interminably at Lima, the law is to him who is strongest.

The rubber has been abandoned these six years, since it does not pay. The little balata there is worked out; for the method employed by those foolish collectors kills the trees. Nothing is left but desolation; angry Indians who have been fed full-bellied with promises; and the crumbling *sitios* of traders who went up when the rubber was good and have never had money enough since to get away.

You, senhores, who travel up this Amazon River on the comfortable steamers of the *Companha Navigazione*, do not hear much of these things; but believe me who knows, it is true.

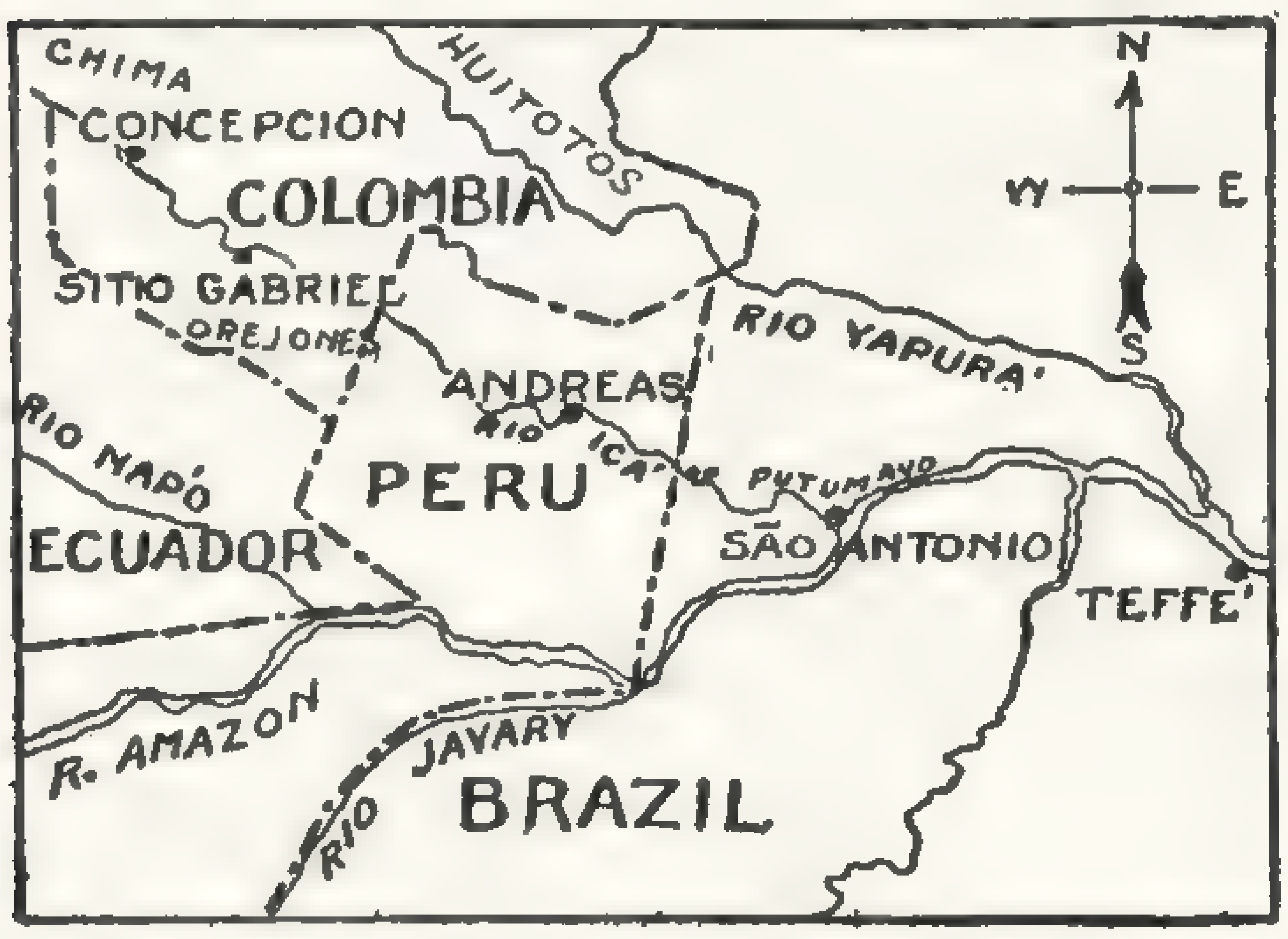
To carry your "little freight" would mean a special journey for me, which would be long and tedious with many places of bad water and with no other recompense. I would have to charge you for four months at least of time. Danger, I might easily discount; for, those Putumayos have been well beaten to tameness; and, while they sometimes, by reason of that very beating, are goaded to uprising, my men are all Huitotos from the Yapurá, and few of these other tribes care to get into trouble with Huitotos.

So there lies the case, senhores. For my time I must charge you one *conto* of milreis. If your freight is worth it, *buom*, I am ready to start tomorrow. Tell me but what it is and where it is to be delivered. But I tell you in advance that there is only one freight that is worthwhile carrying in these days up the Rio Içá, or Putumayo, as men call it after it passes through the borders of Brazil into Peru and through that corner of Peru into Colombia—if ever those borders will be settled.

To Concepçion? But, senhores, why not say, "to the Amazon River?" There are a hundred Concepçions in this Amazonas of ours. Four I know on the Rio Içá alone. We have Concepçáo da Virgem on the Brazilian side, and the Concepçions Imaculada and Maravillosa in the Peruvian corner, and then just plain Concepçion far up in the foot hills of Colombia. The difference is a journey of a thousand miles. Who, then, in all these Concepçions is to get this freight which is so important?

Como? How? A case of Pâté de foie gras? Ha ha, it is enough. The senhores do not have to tell me any more. I know exactly where you wish me to carry this freight and to whom it is to be delivered. You wish me to go even beyond the country of the Putumayo, beyond the *caxoeira* of Unti, or *cachuela*, as they call the bad water rapids up there in Colombia. And the fancy food is for Gabriel, the *administrador* of Indians, no?

Ho-ho, for Gabriel the *Zambo*, the half-negro and half-Indian. Gabriel, who never had but the one name; but whom they call, "Angel" Gabriel; for when his voice is raised a man dies. Senhores, this interests me much. But your freight will I not carry. I will not cheat you. For look, they do not want fancy foods at the *sitio* Gabriel today; no, not even though paid for in advance. That one freight of which I spoke as being worthwhile do they want; and the *sitio* Gabriel is the one place where they want it.



Guns, senhores. Rifles of *Weenshterr*, or better still of *Mauserr*, with many cartridges, is all that they want; and they will pay for them in *gold*. Gold that the Indians bring in fat quills of the jabiru stork.

Look you, *amigos*—draw your heads near and pretend to look at this map while I tell you softly— There are rifles on this steamer, a consignment from the house of Frantz Weiborg in Manaos going to Quito, where the garrison is talking of revolution because the pay has not come for four months. What matter how I know? It is my business to know what happens along these upper rivers of Amazonas. Now, if the senhores can devise some means of acquiring these rifles, or a part of them, we can do good business together; for Joselito Davis, the *Blanco*, will pay many quills of gold for each such weapon.

Gold that the Chima Indians bring in from nobody knows where; for nobody has ever been into their country except this Joselito. My belief is that they smell it out; for they hunt game as do wolves, running with their noses in the air.

Listen, I will tell you the doings at the *sitio* of Gabriel o Angelo, and you shall see what a trade may be done in rifles just now.

* * *

THIS Joselito, you must understand, is a *blanco*, a white man like ourselves. His father was of America of the North. A man tall and fierce, and a miracle with the pistol. Him I never met; but the tale is that one might throw a gourd in the air, and he would immediately produce two enormous revolvers of Colt from nowhere and would pierce it with twelve shots.

A great traveler was he of much eccentricity and an unconquerable antipathy for his own people. He settled first in Manaos; and from there suddenly one day, upon arrival of a gringo who said he knew him, leaped upon a river steamer and came to Teffé at the mouth of the Yapurá. From there he came suddenly here to São Antonio and stayed but a few months. Then swiftly once more he packed up and traveled up this Rio Içá, pressing ever deeper into the wilderness where he might not be bothered by meeting with wandering gringos.

Finally he reached the country of the Muniwas, who had never seen a white man; and there he seemed satisfied at last, and took some six or eight wives to work for him, and built a *chacra* and settled down to live on plantains and mandioca and monkey meat.

Truly men are strange and have many strange ways which are beyond our understanding. But what matter? I tell you these things only that you may understand what manner of man his son was.

José, they called him; and later Joselito. For as the lad grew up with the stringy muscles and turbulent spirit of his father, his talk was ever of becoming a bull fighter, and Joselito, "The Wizard," was his hero. Long-faced and thin-nosed he grew to be, with narrow eyes and faded hair, as light skinned as any one of my Huitotos; he never gained the height of the *Americano*, his father. Yet a youth good to look upon and of good promise.

But what chance of fighting bulls could

ever come to a youth born and brought up in the furthest foot hills of a jungle river?

The father died, and the boy grew up and followed the fate of all his kind. He drifted down the river to the rubber camps of the Putumayo. When the rubber was good he made money and lived on champagne and caviar along with the other *padrones* of the rubber gatherers. When the rubber from the plantations of the East Indies cut a big hole in the market and the jungle rubber fell through the bottom of it, he drifted up the river again to cast in his lot with this Gabriel the *Zambo*.

A cunning fellow, this Gabriel. Balata was beginning to find a market; and he knew where there was balata on the Colombian side. So he quickly called himself a Colombiano and made application to the government at Bogota to be appointed Indian agent at his *hacienda* of San Gabriel de la Annunciaçion y Concepçion.

Of knowledge of the Holy Book I have perhaps less even than this Gabriel. So I can not comment upon the grandiose name he chose. But this I do know: The estate consisted at that time of a palm thatch hut with a chilli-pepper plant in front and a mandioca patch behind.

But he made representation through friends of his, rubber men who had come down into the Putumayo and were now going home. All rubber men lie in harmony together. So in the course of time there came a *pronunciamento* of appointment; and Gabriel the half breed forthwith sat down to grow fat and become a king. For the office of *administrador* of Indians carries with it authority as magistrate, which means in these far places of isolation lord of the high justice and the middle and the low, as it was in the old days.

Strange creatures indeed are men in these jungles where the nature that the good God gave them shows itself without the cramping restrictions of civilization.

Consider this Joselito, senhores; a youth of promise and action, a man as white as you and I, one who may be relied upon to keep his bargain in a trade. And consider his fate: To be the underling of this half breed.

And why? Because the good God gave to the other the blessing of cunning unhampered by the curse of conscience—the one as great a necessity in these jungles where men are close to the primitive, as the other is a handicap.

So Gabriel settled down and grew fat while the Indians who were unfortunate enough to live on the south bank of the river—Orejones, they are, a quiet, subdued people—built for him a *sitio* with store rooms and sheds and landing stages, and then proceeded to fill those sheds with balata.

And while Gabriel grew fat, Joselito grew ever leaner; for to him fell all the labor of directing the gatherers of the gum; and the direction of a crew of balata gatherers is more strenuous than laboring among the trees.

Search gangs must be organized to go out and cut their way through the densest jungle to hunt for the trees. Ax men must be sent out to fell the located trees and gash the bark, so that the latex may ooze out onto a bed of plantain leaves. Porters must be sent out on the trail of the ax men a week or so behind to gather up the coagulated mass of gum and leaves and dirt. And the whole must then be boiled in great tubs and stirred and strained, and boiled again and stirred yet again, till it has been through some four or six of such boilings, depending upon the condition of the latex, before it is white enough to be cast in molds of twenty kilos each and stamped with the name of the producer.

And all this labor of organization fell upon the shoulders of Joselito; for the nature which he inherited from his father was to be up and doing; while Gabriel lolled back in a long-armed chair which had been stolen at some time from one of these very Companha Navigazione boats and grew fatter every day. So fat he grew that his pajama suit in which he lived would meet no more across his gross belly. And ever he smiled with unction as he thought upon the balata that was piling up in his store rooms, and paddled his bare feet in an earthen bowl of water when it was hot.

BALATA, senhores, is no more than a question of labor. For it is not a tree that grows in groves. It is in many places, but usually so isolated that it does not pay to search it out. It is only where, for reasons of soil or rainfall or whatever it may be, it grows fairly close together that the ordinary producer can work it at a profit. But any man who can control sufficient labor sufficiently cheaply may work balata almost anywhere in the upper rivers.

Note now the craft of this Gabriel. His

official position had put him in the happy position of producing it at the minimum cost, for he paid his labor nothing at all. Having gained for himself official authority, all that remained for him to do was to enforce it.

For a single man to enforce his authority over a few thousand jungle Indians is easy, provided that the jungles are sufficiently far enough away for no reports to filter out to the government, and provided that the man is not handicapped with the curse of a conscience.

All that Gabriel did was to summon the sub-chiefs of the tribes before his throne and tell them that he required so many men to work balata. If a sub-chief did not immediately promise to send the required number, Gabriel would suddenly heave himself up into a sitting posture and would roar forth at him in the great bull voice that is the heritage of all these half breed *Zambos*.

If that did not immediately terrify the savage into submission, the fat smile would come back into his face and he would pick up the great pistol that lived ever in the chair with him under his thigh and would shoot at the man. Sometimes he hit him; sometimes he missed. But the result would always be the same. If he missed, the man would be frightened into obedience. If he hit—well, there were other sub-chiefs, and the Indians to work balata would swiftly be forthcoming.

A veritable king of the upper Içá became this Angel Gabriel, as do all these far *administradores dos Indios*. And he was wise in his ways. For, look you, what complaint would ever reach the far government of Bogota? There is no trade that goes up over the mountains from this last removed corner of Colombia. Trade comes *down* river through the last removed corner of Peru into the almost last corner of Brazil. And even the boundaries, as I have said, are in dispute; and who is there to care or interfere with what happens in who knows whose country?

Toward us—that is to say, toward me; for few traders ever go so far—the Zambo was ever careful to be most affable and hospitable. Many a cargo of his balata have I brought down here to São Antonio and delivered safely to the down-river steamer; and many a time have I eaten his rice and his stinking *pirarucu* fish; and have kept my own counsel about the tales that have come to me.

Not one, but a hundred Indians have begged me in their helpless way to make report of his doings, refusing to take payment of the mirrors and fish hooks which I gave in trade for their resin and feathers of the egret. But to whom should I report? *Meu Deus*, there are worse men than he in the Putumayo.

More than once has Joselito spoken with me, conferring upon whether something might not be done for this needless oppression. But to do anything would mean depositions and witnesses and charges made by responsible men at the capital. And I, I am a river man. I do not journey a month over the mountains to Bogota.

To Joselito I suggested that he journey to Bogota himself and lay the case before the *Ministerio de la Hacienda*. But to travel over the mountains requires, believe me, senhores, an expedition with many men and mules, a costly affair. And Gabriel contrived, as is the custom, to keep his few paid assistants ever in debt to himself for goods drawn from his store. Nor would he ever permit any one of them to own a pistol. All the need that might arise for the use of pistols in the *sitio* Gabriel, he said, he could amply take care of himself.

Very cunning had this *Zambo* been in all his arrangements.

Então, to make matters short, thus the affairs progressed with the usual harmony of these upper rivers until came the woman to make the inevitable discord.

I have said, senhores, that the greatest handicap to a jungle man is the curse of conscience. I would amend that by saying that the one yet greater calamity that can befall a man where civilization ends is a woman. *One* woman. Many do not matter. They are but a temporary nuisance, as I know who have had them. But one. *Defende me Deus!* May the good God protect me from losing my head. It is sufficient that He has cursed me with the conscience that is difficult to train.

This was a woman of the Huitotos, who are well famed for their comeliness and much sought by river men for their qualities of virtue and domesticity. I do not know how she got there; but probably she came with some party of her men folk, who are as famous for their strength and river craft as are the women for their looks.

At all events this Joselito Davis must see her; and it was immediately his evil fate to fall utterly in love with her, and she apparently with him. Nothing would do but that he should marry her.

"Fool," said I to him—for I was there at the time on this last up-river trading trip—"you are a *Blanco*, even though you do live in the last corner of the earth and work for a *Zambo*. You are a white man, Senhor Davis—" I gave him the title to stir up in him the pride of race— "A white man like myself. And we of the upper rivers do not marry. Give the girl a measure of cloth and a gift for her father, as is the Huitoto custom, and make her grateful as well as happy."

But he was young and without the power of reason; and the Indian half of his blood, I suppose, called to him. So he persisted in his determination. And right at that point the complications that hang ever round the skirts of a woman began to wrap themselves round him.

THE first was Gabriel. As magistrate, he had the duly licensed power to make marriages. Also many other powers, as of imprisonment and punishment; to which he had added of his own accord all the other powers which he happened to think of. And one which he thought of most frequently and with greatest relish was that of the high justice and the middle and the low.

So, when he saw the maid, he smiled his fat smile and said, no, he would not marry them; at all events not immediately. Later perhaps, when he might be tired of the girl. And he lay back in his chair and dropped his hand to play with his great pistol, and smiled more unctuously than ever as he looked upon the girl, who was well shaped and fair.

Very high handed? Assuredly, senhores. And foolish, too, to treat his right-hand man so. But he was drunk with his own power, this *Zambo* as is always the case with the breed when power comes into their hands. And furthermore, he was in an evil temper these days; for the balata was almost gone; and though he flew into terrible rages and shot at helpless Indians, very little was coming into his store sheds. Hardly worth my while to carry trade so far any longer. And indeed this would have been my last trip, were it not for the matter of the rifles.

So the case was apparently settled. The king had spoken. There was no more to be said. Joselito came to me for counsel, much troubled.

"If you must have her, take her and run away," I told him coldly; for I was disgusted that a *Blanco* should so let his face be pushed into the mire by this gross fellow.

But I was wrong, senhores. The lad was still young, and his environment had been all his life one of submission to those in higher authority. And rebellion against higher and established authority is a very difficult thing. The boy needed but some happening which would stir him deeply to arouse the true spirit of him.

So I answered him with more kindness when he asked me again:

"Where can I run to? To the south are the Orejones, and to the north are the Chima."

True, it was a desperate situation. On the southern bank of the river, where stood the *sitio*, were the Orejones, who hated him because he enforced the commands of Gabriel the king, and who were moreover the abject creatures of the fellow, obeying his least command.

On the north bank, the dense jungles peopled by the Chima, wild implacable creatures, so close to the animals that even the naked Maku nomads whom all other Indians despise, look down on them and call them the ground apes. Squat things they are, with monkey faces and bodies hung well forward and stooping, fit for running through the tangled tapir trails which are their roads. And they hunt, as I have said, by scent, like the great dogs that our forefathers employed to hunt the runaway slaves.

This is a true thing, senhores. They are in appearance, and in this particular of over-developed scent organs, the counterparts of the Chunchos of the far southern jungles of Peru, whom the good *padre* Ignacio Ferrero has described at length. It is probable indeed that they are a wandering offshoot of that tribe. Myself have I seen one of them, for a small reward, smell out a garment hidden in the underbrush, and scuttle then, clucking and chattering, into the jungle, taking the garment with him as being sure of what he held in his hand and suspicious that the promised reward would not be paid.

This much I know for myself. But the

Indians tell miraculous tales of their prowess. Better than dogs, they say they are, having more intelligence; yet falling short of dogs on a faint trail by reason of the fact that they sniff the air rather than the ground, and the scent may thus be overlaid by the stronger scents of the jungle, such as the overpowering scent of certain orchids or the sweet-sickly smell of bee trees or that strong sour-sweet smell of ants which even we white men can detect.

Much of these Indian tales can we overlook, of course; but, at that, what chance would a youth, even though he knew the jungles as well as this Joselito, have of winning through such a people to the more friendly tribes still farther north on the Rio Yapurá?

So I advised him kindly.

"Fool," I said. "Go up-river to your own people of the Muniwas. Raise a war party of the young men and come down and kill this *Zambo* and be king in his place."

His long narrow eyes fired at the thought. But after thought he shook his head.

"No," he said. "They are not my people. I am a white man."

Então, bom. I shrugged. What was I to do? The affair was, after all, not mine to embroil myself with a ruler who could cut me off from the upper head waters whence came the best feathers of the egret and where I was planning to go at that very time.

YET that same night the spirit of the lad awoke in him. The necessary deeply stirring happening was apparently his so foolish love for this woman. So he took his mate, as a true man should, and stole a canoe; and when morning came he was gone.

But not up-river to the Muniwas, as I had counseled him. What youth of twenty-two or so ever takes good advice? Particularly when his judgment has been unbalanced for love of a maid?

When it was found that he was gone, and with him the woman whom the king had selected for his own, Gabriel o Angelo roared so that one of his disgruntled underlings muttered in my hearing, "*Gabriel o Burro.*" And indeed his gross, hair-covered belly panted beneath his open pajama coat in keeping with his voice, like a wind-broken mule's.

Furious inquiry brought trembling Indians of the little settlement which fringed the riverbank below the *sitio* who said that they had seen him come softly by night with the woman and take an *uba*, a light dug-out, and paddle swiftly downstream.

Then I knew what was in his mind. He was speeding to Andreas in the Putumayo, where there is a mission, in order to get married like a white man forsooth. But, *tcha-tcha*, what foolishness! I could have told him what would happen.

Gabriel roared and swelled at the neck, and gave orders for a fast canoe with six paddlers to start immediately in pursuit; and to come back with both the fugitives; or it would be better for them not to come back at all.

The result, of course, was inevitable. What chance has a two-paddle canoe, one of them a woman—even though she be a Huitoto—to outdistance six strong men born with paddles in their hands? They took but a hurried supply of *farinha* of the mandioca yam and sped from the bank, verily like an arrow, using the short choppy pulling stroke of all these Indians of the Içá. Not like my Huitotos, who use a long stroke, pushing from the shoulder, which is perhaps not quite so speedy, but which they can keep up for endless hours at a stretch while they take turns to maintain a humming rhythm of *mm-m—hmm mm-m—hâ* on two notes.

The Huitoto method, I think, is better. Yet I knew that these pursuers would keep up the chase without a break for rest or food, resting in relays of two at a time and taking for nourishment only the *farinha* gulped down with river water dipped up in a gourd, on which fare they can subsist for a month if need be.

My heart pained me for that young man; for I knew what the outcome would be. And Gabriel saw his canoe go off and shouted his last threats at the men, and then returned to pant in his chair after that exertion. And slowly, as his breath came back to him there came with it the smile, fat and oily and very evil. And he began to tell me with gusto what he would do to that couple who had so dared to flout his royal authority.

But I had other business to attend to, and left him to his own enjoyment. I had a leak in one of my boats to stop, and I was in difficulty, for I had no calking material. But I overcame it after much thought by melting down resin of the puna tree with butter, which made a very satisfactory pitch. Also word had come to me that some of the less wild Chima were hiding in the jungle fringe across the river, waiting to trade with me for iron arrow-heads and fish hooks.

A half day's work, not more; and I was in a hurry to get on up river. But I waited over to see what would happen to this foolish Joselito; and it occurred to me, too, that my presence might be of some possible service to him.

On the third day they came back, the pursuers and the pursued. But of the six who went only four came back, and of the four, two carried machete wounds. So the lad had fought. I was glad. But what availed his fighting, after all, since both he and the woman lay bound in the bottom of the canoe?

Gabriel lolled in his throne under the thatch of his veranda which looked out on to the riverfront, and smiled as a spider must smile when its prey comes into its trap. I stood by, thinking that perhaps I might at least save his life for Joselito; for I knew the evil that lay beneath that fat smile. But Gabriel was not a fool. Joselito was his best worker, and he did not intend to lose that labor just yet.

FOR a while he gloated over the two as they stood before him with their hands bound in front of them, as is the custom of these Indians, and which, after all, is safe enough and very practical; for a man so bound may eat for himself without the trouble of loosening him, and a simple cord passing under his thigh prevents him from taking his teeth to the knots except when he is permitted to eat.

The men of the *sitio* gathered round, half-fearful, half-curious , with the apathy of well bullied men. But they left a wide space between the prisoners and the river behind them. That is to say in other words, before the range of the pistol. Also the men who held them, held shrinkingly at arms' length. Very illuminating was their attitude on the customary method of justice at the *sitio* of Gabriel the angel.

Gabriel said no word. Neither did the prisoners. Only the boy glared at him as a jaguar glares, without a flicker of the eye. To which Gabriel replied with a grin like a *caiman*, and pointed with his head at the beating post.

This post was a diversion of his own thinking. Simply a post planted in the ground, and some six or eight feet high. A culprit to be "corrected" was but lifted till his bound wrists passed over the top and there he stood then, free to move, to run round and round the post in his efforts to escape the lash of twisted tapir hide; thereby affording much amusement to the beholders. Truly a pretty sport.

The creatures of the *Zambo* seized Joselito and hustled him swiftly to obey their lord's order. He saw me looking at him, and grinned at me wide open.

"He has stolen a canoe, and he has killed two men. It is the law," he said.

I remained silent. The man was cunning like the devil, and it was his right to administer justice.

But Joselito made no sport for the crowd. He refused to run round the post as the whip tore the already ragged shirt from his back. Neither did he cry out. He leaned merely against the post with his head, taking a loose end on the thong that bound his hands between his teeth, and braced his back to the blows. The Indian who swung the whip remembered that this was the overseer, the *jefe,* who had enforced upon him and upon his people the orders of the king, and he took joyful toll for all the labor that he had furnished without pay, till the *Blanco's* knees began to waver and grow limp and the head and bound wrists began to slip slowly down the pole. Still came no cry from the lad. Truly had he found his spirit, the spirit of the tall fierce man from the north, his father.

But from the woman came a sudden cry; a scream as of a *tigre da montanha.* With the scream she turned her head suddenly and bit fiercely into the arm of the man who held her. Shouting on the name of God, the man let go of his grip; and she, screaming again, ran swiftly forward at Gabriel where he lolled back in his chair and gloated.

As the hands of her man had been passed over the post of torture, so she threw her bound wrists over the head of Gabriel and sunk her teeth into the side of his neck, tearing at it as the *tigre* tears at the thick vein of a fat tapir.

With the startled shouts of surprize from the others mingled my own shout of encouragement; for at that moment I hated this fat beater of men. But the man's very fatness saved him. Too deeply protected was the vein. His men rushed forward and dragged the woman from him and held her, panting and spitting fury, while he in turn panted in great sterterous sobs and stanched his bleeding neck with the corner of his pajama coat.

As the fear presently began to die out of his eyes, the rage began to come in. And as his breathing began to ease, the voice came back to him. Like a bull of the sanded arena he bellowed, and with a shaking hand he fumbled for the pistol beneath his thigh and lifted it.

But even in his rage he caught my eye, and his natural cunning reminded him that I would be a bad eye-witness to have to his doings, being not without influence in these upper rivers. So he pointed the pistol, instead of at the woman, at the whipping post.

"Her too," he roared. "Remove that man of hers and give her a taste of the taming that comes to these who show disrespect to the agent of the government."

But at this I stepped into the matter.

"Gabriel o Angelo," I told him. "This thing will now cease."

He looked for a moment as if he would point the big pistol at me.

"And why not?" he frothed at me. "Why in the name of all the —— not? *Car' alhos*, am I not the justice of the peace, appointed by the government, and has this savage cat not broken the peace? Why shall she not be beaten?"

I was able to smile in my turn, for the fortune of the circumstances was all on my side.

"Because," I said to him with much enjoyment. "Because this woman is a Huitota; and my men are all Huitotos. Fifteen of them, all armed; and it is well known that the Huitotos do not permit their women to be beaten by strangers."

He choked on his rage then; but even so the blessing of cunning did not depart from him. He looked round and saw my men standing with sullen faces; and he knew that they could erase his *sitio* from the scene with ease as well as with much gusto. For—here was the rebound of justice—he knew that he could expect but little defense from his own Indians.

So he swallowed his rage, gulping hard many times, while he still dabbed at his lacerated neck, from which the blood flowed plentifully over the dirty pajama coat and fat naked belly.

"Very well," he grumbled. "Good. The justice of the government will be magnanimous. Put them both in the *calabouço* to think over their crimes for a few days; and we will say that they have been punished enough."

Then he turned again to me with a smeary friendliness.

"Amigo Theophilo," he said. "It is for your sake that I do this. Moreover I am a just man. Though in my just anger I might have been impelled to exact the full penalty of the law; for you will admit that I was much tried. Come, let me but get one of my women to bind unguent upon these wounds where that she-cat of the pampas bit me, and we shall eat together."

But I had no stomach for his rice and fish and yet less for his company. So I gathered my men and took to my boats, having wasted enough time already; for I was bound up-river to the headwaters where the *garca* hunters would be waiting for me, according to arrangement, with two season's supply of feathers of the egret. Five month's journey was before me and much bad water. So I cried the "*Awai-ee-ee-o*," and my Huitotos dipped their round-bladed paddles and bent to the long song of *mm-m—hmm mm-m—há*.

THE next that I heard of Joselito the *Blanco* was a confused jumble of stories relayed from one river Indian to another. A matter of small importance to travel so far, you will say. Without doubt, senhores, a little affair. But in the upper rivers nothing ever happens; and such matters constitute the news of one's neighbors, even though the neighbors live with a hundred miles of wilderness between them.

It is these little things that are the gossip of the day when canoes meet. Why, I have heard four hundred miles away such trifling matter as "The headhunters have made a raid on So-and-So's village," or "Such and such a woman's child has been carried off by a jaguar."

So the tale presently filtered up to me that the woman had been released from the *calabouço* and set to work with the other women of the household of Gabriel, with the promise of regaining the royal favor if she conducted herself well. At which I was forced to smile; for he was a gross beast, and the maid, as I have said, was fair; and I knew that he was but seeking to save his face before he should take her.

But she, so far from behaving herself, made endeavor to effect the escape of her man, who was not to be forgiven so easily—as why should he? For there was but little work to be done just then with the balata gatherers. She was, of course, caught in her attempt—the other women gave information against her, it seems—for she was young as well as fair.

And then—the tale was not very clear; for the man who told me had omitted to ask unimportant details—somehow or other the woman died. No, she was not beaten. She just sickened and died. I have thought since that some of the other women could possibly explain how.

So that ended that complication. The way for the forgiveness of Joselito and for his return to work was now clear. It required but a little period yet for him to forget his infatuation and his anger against his chief. Gabriel, in fact, even condoled with him through the bars of the door and assured him that he personally bore no ill will against him; but that his offense against the law in the killing of the two men necessitated yet a little while of incarceration. So that presently, as he hoped, all would be peaceful again and a good worker returned to labor.

Often have I laughed to myself in imagining the unction of the man as he spoke his magnanimity. But this Joselito seemed to be incapable of appreciating his chief's spirit of forgiveness. He contrived somehow his own escape one evening and burst suddenly in upon the *Zambo* as he sat at his meal attended only by his women.

Weaponless he leaped upon his enemy with his bare hands to fight him as the white men fight. And the tale of that fight was good hearing. Would that I had been there to see it. Calling him a black half breed and a hairy monkey of the woods, he buffeted the fat *Zambo* about the face with his fists and elbows and tore much hair from his head and finally kicked him in the stomach, so that he groaned like a stricken ox and nearly died. He would indeed have torn the throat out of the man as he lay; but that the shrieking of the women brought men running; and they threw themselves upon him five at a time and dragged him off and thrust him once again in the *calabouço*.

When Gabriel the Angel recovered under the ministrations of his women he was still a very sick man; but his first speech, thickly through his swollen throat, was that on the morrow the boy would surely die at the beating post; and that in the mean while, as an earnest of what was coming to him, his tongue was to be cut out for the things he had said during the fight.

Yet in the same moment he changed his order, saying, no, let the tongue stay, for he desired to hear him scream for mercy under the whip. Let it be an ear, and let it be suspended round his neck by a thong.

A fellow by the name of Gorgio, a brother of one of his women, whom he had raised to a deputy administratorship, took seven others and went and did this thing. And when he reported the doing to Gabriel, that one laughed like a wolf and fell to coughing blood by reason of the soreness of his throat. Yet he laughed still at the thought of the morrow's enjoyment.

But Joselito Davis did not wait for the morrow. In the night he escaped again; it turned out that he had gnawed a window bar with his teeth; for the *calabouço* was but a homemade affair with hardwood fittings instead of iron; and in the general confusion of the night the thing had been overlooked. So he got away and swam the river to take refuge in the jungles of the northern shore.

Gabriel's fury was no more than was to be expected. But what could he do? The men who were responsible for the guarding of the prisoner, Indians of the Orejones, of course, when they found that he was gone, ran away to hide in the farthest confines of their tribe. So presently, when the fury was exhausted, Gabriel laughed again.

"I would have enjoyed his punishment myself," he said. "But the Chima of the deep jungles know things about killing that even I can not hope to emulate. Send them a garment of his to smell, and promise them a whole pound of fish hooks for his head when they are through with it."

SO THAT was the end of that matter. I was sorry when I heard of it, for the lad had proved himself to be a man. On my way down from the head waters I told the tale to the chiefs of the Muniwas, hoping almost that they might send their young men to make a raid on the *sitio* Gabriel to take vengeance for a man the son of a woman of their tribe. But they took counsel and said:

"He is not of our people. He is a white man. And why for a white man's sake should our young men attack a *sitio* where there are guns?"

Which, after all, was no more than was to be expected. So I came on down, thinking that this was but another case of a good man destroyed by the complications which hang round the skirts of a woman. I considered him as dead. Yet the next news that I heard of this Joselito came while I was at the *sitio* myself.

I was delayed there a full month by reason of an attack of the *malaria terciana;* and while there, there came one day a man in an *uba,* a dug-out of the smallest size. So little and so low in the water that he looked, as he paddled up the river, exactly as if he sat in the water and progressed.

He grounded his craft on the beach right in front of Gabriel's veranda and came up to talk with us. And as he approached, Gabriel fell from his chair with fright; and I, too, muttered a *defende me Deus,* and prepared to back away to a distance.

For the man's limbs and face were all deeply pitted with little scars and eaten away as by some frightful disease. He guessed what was in our minds and made haste to reassure us. He grinned a lipless grin and called out in a thick lisping voice, as if the tongue, too, had been affected:

"No, it is not the small pox; nor that other. It is but one of the mischances of the jungle."

And he came into the veranda and stood before us. Truly he was a sight to inspire horror. He wore garments of the *tapa* cloth, which is made by beating out the bark of a certain tree, scanty enough to show the terrible pitted scars on his body. But the worst was his face.

"God have mercy," I said to myself. "That such a mischance does not come to me in the jungles."

The man's nose was gone, eaten down to a hollow such as one sees among the lepers of Villa Sancta. The lips showed gums and teeth in a perpetual grin. The ears were just waxy patches, like a macaw's; and from the midst of the wreck glowed the eyes, small and red like a parrot's.

Yet he seemed to be full of a considerable satisfaction; though in truth it was difficult to tell whether this man grinned or scowled. There were no features left to express his thought.

"*Meu Deus, amigo,*" said Gabriel to him when he had sufficiently recovered from his fear, "but the jungles have treated you more badly than most."

The man grinned—apparently.

"Not so badly," he lisped. "Look."

And from his girdle he produced quills. Thick wing quills of the *jabiru;* a whole bundle of them. And they were all filled with gold sand.

"And I know where there is more of it," said the man, "a riverbed full. But I need outfit. Provisions, medicines, weapons. Particularly is my first immediate need for weapons. A machete, long and heavy, and a pistol, the biggest in the land; for they are a terrible people where that gold is."

Gabriel was ever eager to make a trade; and especially was he eager when he knew that his customer had dire need; for then his price mounted according to the need. So he heaved himself out of his chair and waddled to his storeroom with the smile of benevolence which he always prepared for the charming of his customers when he told them his prices.

"First the pistol," said the man. "For that is my greatest need; and you must show me how to use it, for I am unaccustomed."

"*Meninho!*" muttered Gabriel. "Unaccustomed to the use of guns; and are you not afraid to venture back where mischances like yours happen?"

The man thrust his hand beneath his bark shirt to finger an amulet which hung from a cord, and crossed himself and barked what was meant for a laugh.

"I am nowadays afraid of nothing," he said with hardness in his voice. "Show what you have."

So Gabriel produced a great revolver of Colt and told him:

"Look! This is a pistol of the finest. It belonged to an *Americano* who came to live among the Indians and who died; and the pistol came to me then in trade. That *Americano* could hit with it the head of a lizard at forty paces. Its accuracy is of the best. This is the finest and largest pistol that I have. It is the mate to the one I use;

and you may believe me, who know, that it will kill a man very completely at forty paces. It will cost you two quills of gold."

"Good," said the man. "That pistol is worth anything at all to me. Show me now how to use it."

So Gabriel waddled back to his chair, for standing was a pain to him, and explained the loading and the care of the weapon; and he told the man:

"Look now! This is my advice. Since you have no practise with the pistol, the way to shoot straightest is to rest it, so, over the crook of your left arm to steady it. And when you shoot at a man, shoot not at his head, which is small; but at his stomach, which is large. He will surely die just the same, though it will take longer and hurt more, much more. But that—ho-ho—that is his misfortune."

AND he showed him, further, how he should score a cross in the nose of the bullet, which was a talisman of luck and would also cause the ball to break apart in the wound and do deadly damage. And he told him, too, how he should press slowly upon the trigger and not jerk it in firing the shot. All the use of a pistol he taught him; and he loaded it up and gave it to him, saying:

"That pistol, my friend, is cheap for only two quills of gold."

The man looked at the weapon.

"This pistol is well worth two quills of gold to me" he said.

And he stood there in the veranda in front of Gabriel and rested the barrel on the crook of his left arm and pointed it at Gabriel's great naked stomach and pressed slowly upon the trigger.

Gabriel's great body squeezed back in the chair as if struck with a great weight. His eyes opened in wide surprize, and, "*Como?*" he muttered thickly. "*Como?* How—how?" which ended with a groan as of a bull at the thrust of the *matador*, and his body slid down further in the chair. But the eyes remained open and full of wonder and the fear of death.

I leaped to seize the madman. But he pointed the pistol at me. And, as I stood back, the full madness came upon him. He tore the amulet from his breast, a gruesome thing, like a dried mushroom threaded upon a thong, and thrust it in Gabriel's face.

"Look at it!" he grated hoarsely at him, for his voice could not shout. "Look at it and remember! The other one is eaten away with the rest of my face; but this dried one they wouldn't eat. Can you see still, *Zambo?* Look! Look at the thong! Your own thong—with the ear of Joselito threaded upon it! Can you remember yet? You said it would take long to die. Look at me and remember."

"*Deus da Graça!*" I cried. "It is the dead one!"

He looked at me and grinned recognition, and turned then again to his leaping and thrusting of that horrible dried ear in Gabriel's face.

"*He* knows me," he hissed. "Theophilo knows. Look at my face, *Zambo*, and know me too. Not the smallpox, *Zambo;* not the rotting sickness. Ants! *Formigas do forno*, the fire-oven ants of an inch long!

"They followed me, those fiends of the Chima jungle. Though I lay in the slimy creeks with the caimans, they smelt out my trail. In an ant tree I took refuge! In many ant trees! *Madre mia*, what a forest of ant trees is in that jungle!

"Look at my face, *Zambo*, and judge what I have suffered. What the ants left, the blood poisoning completed. To die of a wound in the stomach is no suffering at all. And you will surely die, as you promised, even though it takes longer and hurts more. But that—ho-ho—that is your misfortune.

"Many more things I have to tell you, Gabriel, who will soon be an angel of the devil. But your people press round. I must chase them off. Wait for me, my angel. Do not die yet. Swiftly will I chase them and tell you then all the things that are in my soul."

It was time and high time for him to turn in his own defense; for the men of the *sitio* crowded the space in front of the veranda, waiting only the necessary man of initiative to lead them on to a rush. Joselito reached under the stricken man's thigh and took the other pistol that the people knew so well. Standing then with both of them in his hands, the pair of deadly things which had been his father's, he stepped to the front of the veranda and croaked his defiance at the crowd.

And as the pistols pointed, the men whom they singled out melted away.

In an incredibly short space of time I could see canoes being launched by ones and twos and speeding away from that place. Presently only Indians of the *sitio* stood in the open space before the veranda. Of the creatures of Gabriel not one remained to take vengeance for their master who had been.

Which after all, senhores, is not to be wondered at. For when a man has schooled a people to be ruled by fear, they will naturally be afraid of any other man who vanquishes the first. And why should men fight who have nothing left to gain and only their lives to lose?

So, as the time passed, and with it the frenzy of Joselito's rage, I was able to talk to him and calm him down, and presently able also to lead him away. And I got him something to eat, which he much needed; and thereafter I got him to sleep, which he needed much more.

Gabriel o Angelo died two hours later in great torment. But I think, as Joselito had said, that it was not even a small portion of what he himself had suffered.

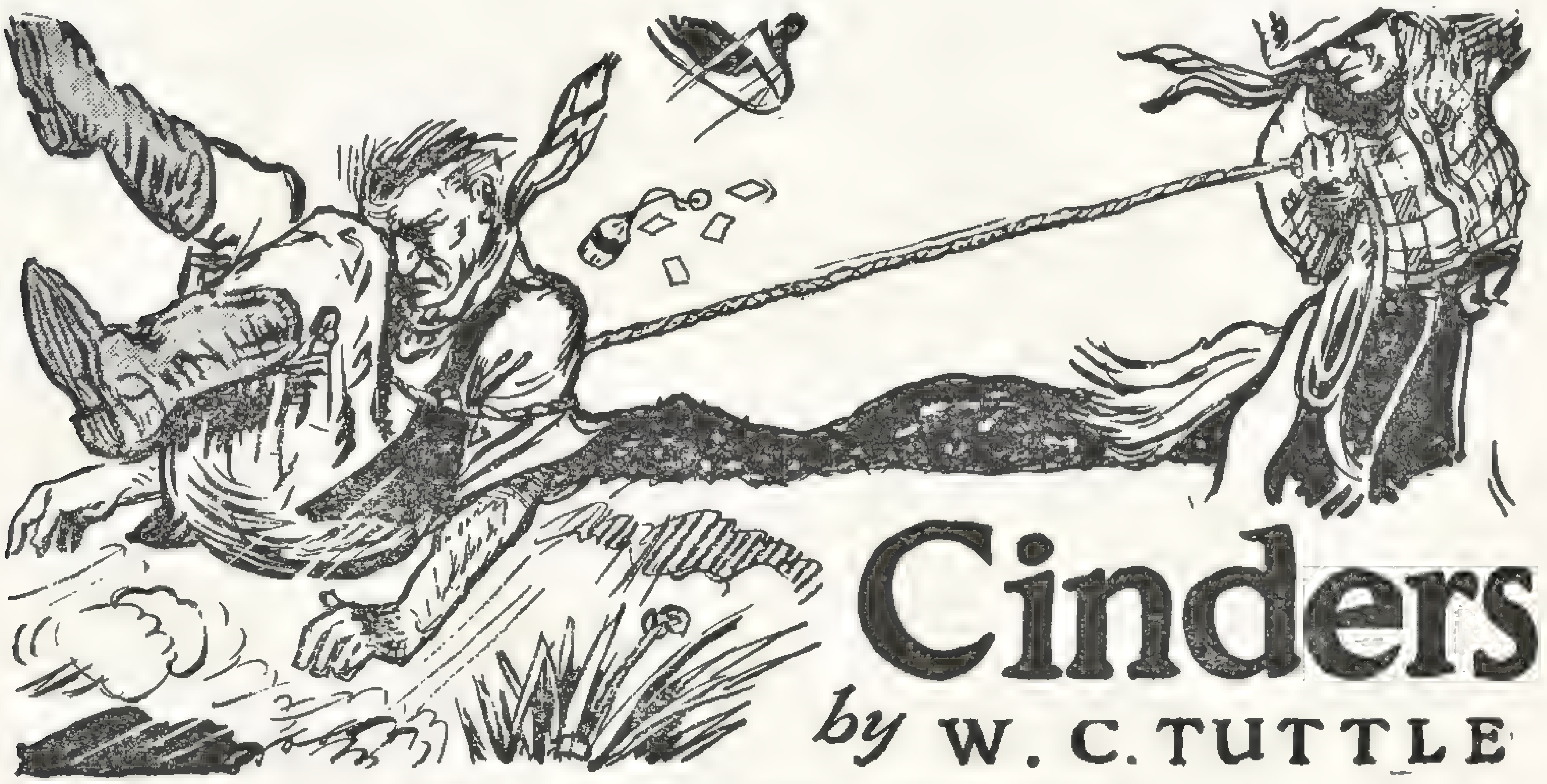
So that was the end of that matter.

Later Joselito told me the full tale of his wanderings in the jungle and of his many escapes from the Chima wild men who hunted him by scent. And terrible was the tale. But all that has nothing to do with the business in hand of procuring rifles, which are a necessity for the finding of the gold; or rather, of the getting of it. Of the finding, Joselito told me also. The place is known to him without any manner of doubt. The gold is easy to get, too, being free-washing sand of the river bed.

All is easy, but the Indians. The Chima, who are as relentless as wolves. For defense against them are many men needed; and for the men, rifles.

And for these rifles, senhores, will there be gold. Many fat quills for each gun. And that is the only trade for which there is a value today in all the Rio Içá. And Joselito, my good friend Joselito, has told me that he will give his trade to no other but me. And since he is now very surely the king of all the upper Içá, the trade will be good and the price very good indeed.

Is it not then better to prevent those rifles from going up to make a revolution at Quito? Assuredly, senhores.



Cinders

by W. C. TUTTLE

Author of "Just for a Laugh," "Sun-Dog Loot," etc.

JAMES WORTHINGTON STEELE was a man of importance. In the affairs of the C. M. & G. Railroad he was *E pluribus unum*, XXXX, bottled in bond; which is quite some label in these Volsteadian days.

To Mrs. James Worthington Steele, a lady of great avoirdupois, he was a fair pinocle player. Not good—just fair. To Alicia Worthington, the daughter, he was something to depend upon in a financial way.

Alicia might be branded a vampire. Not

that Alicia was bad. Oh, dear, no—not at all. But she knew that she was pretty, had wicked eyes and wore beautiful creations. Alicia would scorn to wear just clothes.

But even an important railroad magnate hankers for the untrammeled spaces of the great outdoors at times; and this was why James Worthington Steele's private car, the Lake Louise, was parked near a California lake, where the trout jumped almost off the pages of the railroad folders.

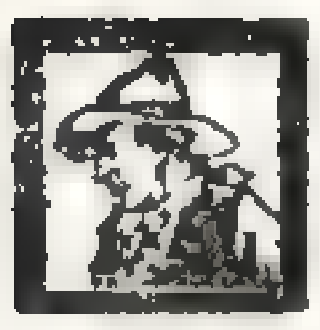
And it was here that a message came to James Worthington Steele, advising that he come at once to straighten out a tangle, which greatly affected the interests of his company. Unfortunately the passenger service on this particular branch of the C. M. & G. was not too good. The train had left about thirty minutes prior to the telegram; so it was up to James Worthington Steele to have the Lake Louise hooked to the rear end of a freight train, which would take him out to the main line. This especial freight train seemed to have been made up of all the decrepit rolling-stock owned by the aforementioned railroad; so their progress was not very swift.

And it was hot in the Lake Louise. To make matters worse for James Worthington Steele, Mrs. Steele insisted that they play pinocle. And when Mrs. Steele insisted, there was nothing for James Worthington to do but agree.

Alicia was bored to distraction. This was not her idea of a good time. She had been communing with nature too long for one of her disposition. She wanted some one to make eyes at, except a perspiring brakeman, who swore openly at everything connected with the railroad business.

And with everybody in this pleasant mood, the train jerked to a stop at the station of San Rego. The train drew up far enough for the observation platform of the Lake Louise to stop midway of the station platform. Alicia lolled in an easy chair, mumbled at some sodden chocolates and wished she was far away from San Rego.

Suddenly she sat up.



BUT that is getting along too far in the story. "Slim" Simpson weighed exactly two hundred and twenty pounds. He was twenty-two years of age—and in love. He had been a perfectly good cowpuncher until the love-bug inoculated his emaciated form; but now he was worthless for anything—except love.

Sadie Thompson was the maid of his choice. Sadie's pa was proprietor, or rather station-agent at San Rego. He owned a little home on the outskirts of San Rego, with honeysuckle, or something like that, around the door.

Sadie was of a jealous and suspicious nature, and she had a sneaking idea that Slim had danced too many times with the school teacher the night before. Anyway, she told Slim that she wouldn't divide him up with any woman, even if there was enough of him to divide.

Poor Slim had poked his nose to the sky and wailingly assured her that he was "her'n, and only her'n." But Sadie parted the honeysuckles, or whatever grew about the porch, and sent Slim uptown, pawing his way through a haze of indigo blue.

Slim didn't want a drink; he wanted solitude. And where may a man find more assorted kinds of solitude than on the heat scourged planks of a desert depot. He made up his mind to be a martyr—and melt.

But at the depot he ran into Jim Hilton and Barney McGonigle from the Lazy B ranch. They were trying to dig up enough money to pay for an express package, which had come C. O. D. They greeted him warmly and borrowed a dollar and eighty cents.

It was at this time that the freight train pulled in. Jim and Barney went outside, carrying their package, and got one look at Alicia. Slim was resting his elbows on the ledge of the ticket window, when Barney toptoed back inside and nudged Slim.

"C'mere," he whispered sotto voce. "My ——, Slim, the Queen of Sheber is among us. C'mon."

Slim followed. Who wouldn't? Alicia had sat up. The box of soggy chocolates were forgotten. Here was raw material for her to work on. Back in the car she heard her mother say—

"Hundred aces and a hundred and fifty trump."

Slim moved closer. From the front end of the train came the clatter of couplers as the engine moved ahead. Slim moved closer. Just before the Lake Louise obeyed the impulse of the engine, Alicia's left eyelid drew down in an unmistakable wink—a very expressive wink.

Barney exploded and clung weakly to

Jim Hilton. Slim did not turn his head, but walked slowly to the far edge of the platform, following the departing train. But Alicia did not wink again. She picked up her book, dipped into the chocolates and faded out in the distance.

Slim sighed, turned around and looked into the face of Sadie Thompson. He shuddered. Barney and Jim were watching them.

"So that's the way you put in your time, is it?" demanded Sadie. "Flirting with every girl you see, eh?"

"I—I wasn't flirtin'," denied Slim. "My gosh, Sadie, I never——"

"Yes?" Sadie grew sarcastic. "Didn't I see that wink? Here!"

She tugged at the third finger of her left hand and gave him back his ring.

"I'm all through with you," she declared chokingly. "I will never trust a man again. Take back your fickle ring."

Sadie turned and hurried toward home, while behind her came Slim, looking all spraddled out, as he tried to catch her and explain. But Sadie walked erratically down the narrow sidewalk, which kept Slim jumping from side to side; much to the amusement of every one who observed it.

Sadie beat him to the gate, fastened it from the inside, and faced him—a picture of outraged womanhood.

"Go back!" Sadie pointed dramatically. "Get on your horse and follow the maid. I want no more of you!"

Slim went. There was no good reason why he should stay. Back there on the sunny side of the depot, where the thermometer registered one hundred and ten degrees in the shade, Slim sat in the sun, and cogitated over the vagaries of women.

The incident passed from the mind of Alicia Steele. It was only one wink among many. If her wink brought a thrill to that fat cowboy, he was welcome to it. Two miles out of San Rego the train lurched to another stop.

HALF an hour later the conductor, perspiring, dusty, came to the Lake Louise and informed James Worthington Steele that half the axle-boxes on the train were on fire, and they would have to be delayed another hour.

James Worthington Steele mopped his brow and swore. It was imperative that he move on.

"Can't be did," declared the conductor. "It's ten miles to Mesquite City, and ten more to the Mission Junction. I'm afraid you won't be able to hook this car on to No. 117. They are due there in thirty minutes."

James Worthington Steele was a good railroad man; so he did not rave. He knew just how bad most of their rolling-stock was. But he must at least get a message through; so the conductor ran a wire from the Lake Louise, tapped the telegraph, and let James Worthington Steele send his own messages.

Be it known that James Worthington Steele had at one time been a dispatcher on this same road; so it was no trouble for him to handle his correspondence via wire, through the medium of his own private telegraph instrument, which had long since been part of the Lake Louise's equipment.

After proving an alibi for not being able to attend the important meeting, which he managed to postpone, he went back to his game of pinocle. Not that he wanted to play; but his wife did.

The instrument clacked merrily away, and excited the interest of Alicia, who was becoming more bored each moment. On the polished mahogany table was a code book, containing the station calls, codes, etc., and on the fly-leaf was printed the Morse code of telegraphy.

Alicia glanced over it, and the code, with its dots and dashes, attracted her. She scanned the pages for San Rego. The station call was SR. Looking back at the code, she found the two letters. She had seen her father use it many times; so what could be easier?

She sat down, opened the key and began laboriously to tap out the SR signal. Several times she repeated it, before closing the key. The sounder rattled, as the operator at San Rego answered his call. Alicia had no idea what he was saying, but she had an idea of what she was going to say. Her ennui was all gone now.

Back in the hot little depot at San Rego, old Bill Thompson, the father of Sadie, squinted at the sounder of his instrument, a scowl on his face, as it began slowly ticking out a message.

"H-e-l-p,h-e-l-p,h-e-l-p."

The dots, dashes and spaces were not the work of a telegrapher. The agent cut open his key and wanted to know who in the blankety-blank was using that instrument.

But still it continued to tap out the one word. The agent bit down on his pipestem and swore to himself. Then the sounder awoke anew.

"H-e-l-p h-o-l-d-u-p p-r-i-v-a-t-e c-a-r h-e-l-p."

The agent snapped to his feet. He had seen the private car at the rear of that freight, and he knew well who James Worthington Steele was. There was a holdup. Some one was robbing the private car!

He opened his key and called Mesquite City. Had the freight reached there? It had not. The agent asked him if he had heard the call for help.

"Been out to eat," replied the Mesquite operator. "Heard J. W. Steele sending before I left. The freight is stuck about two miles from San Rego."

The agent whirled from his desk and ran outside. Around the corner he went and almost fell over Slim, who grunted and got to his feet. The agent was a quick thinker.

"Slim, where's your horse?"

"Right there." Slim pointed at a long-legged sorrel, tied to a ring in the rear platform. "What's the matter?"

"Did you see that private car on that freight that——"

"Yeah, I seen it." Slim was sarcastic.

"Down the track about two miles!" panted the agent. "It's being held up. Just got a wire."

"Oh, yeah."

Slim squinted at the agent. It might be a joke, but the man seemed in earnest.

"Slim, that's Steele, the biggest railroad man in this country; owns this —— railroad and more too. Can't yuh go and help 'em?"

But Slim was halfway to the sorrel, running as fast as he could go. The agent ran back, opened his key and sent an assurance that help was coming.

"What are you kidding about?" demanded the operator at Mesquite City.

Swiftly the San Rego agent told him about the holdup. Mesquite City was the county seat.

"Shall I notify the sheriff?" asked Mesquite City.

The San Rego operator started in to tell him what to do, when the door opened behind him and Sadie came in. He glanced at her and turned back to his key.

"Dad, where is Slim going?" asked Sadie.

Dad broke off sending.

"He's following that freight."

Then Dad turned and hammered out instructions.

"Where is that freight?" Sadie was outwardly calm, but her face had gone white. Slim was following out her instructions.

"Two miles down the road," said Dad, and continued to hammer at his key.

Sadie fairly ran out of the office and around to where her roan horse was tied. She had seen Slim going away in a cloud of dust, which had not yet settled. In a few moments she was adding to the dust cloud, following Slim.

"SOUP" Lannigan was not a gentleman—not by at least a generation or two. He was a yegg, pure but not at all simple. Just now he slid back the door of a freight car, wiped a little coal dust off his face and looked around. Soup was not at all handsome. He was about five feet seven inches tall, with broad shoulders, almost no neck, and a pair of long muscular arms. His forehead retreated while his jaw protruded. If a scientist were to discover Soup's skull—it would date back at least twenty thousand years.

It was hot in that box car, but it was also hot outside. Soup was thirsty. He squinted back past the caboose, looking around like an animal. Then he rubbed his eyes. Even at two cars distant his eyes beheld a white-clad arm appear and toss a couple of bottles into the sage.

Soup wrinkled his forehead in deep thought. He knew that there were no dining-cars on freight trains. He also knew that this caboose did not carry a white-clad porter. Soup swung warily down, edged away from the car and squinted at the shiny private car. Then he ducked back.

There was nothing to cause Soup to duck back, except, like an animal, he was always expecting something to happen. Then he crawled under the train. Ten cars distant he could see the crew working over a hotbox. He scuttled back. Just back of the private car was a sharp curve, and Soup was wise enough in railroad matters to know that the rear brakeman would be beyond that turn, flagging the rear.

Soup licked his lips, gripped the stubby automatic in his sagging coat pocket, and went softly back to the platform of the Lake Louise. He felt sure that there would be more cold bottles; and he was not averse to taking most anything of value.

THE telegraph instrument did not amuse Alicia for long. She was unable to decipher anything it said, because it clicked too fast; so she sank down in a deep, leather chair, picked up her book and began reading. The air off the desert was like a blast from a furnace. Two electric fans droned softly, but did little more than stir up the heat.

In his own end of the car, where an ice box and other luxuries of private-car life were carried, Moses Jones, an elongated, shuffling son of Ham, proceeded to uncork two more bottles. Mose was immaculate, but very moist.

Mose picked up his tray, containing glasses and the two cold bottles, stepped into the corridor just in time to feel the swift jab of Soup's automatic into his white-clad ribs.

Mose almost telescoped under the strain, and he elevated his tray until the bottles almost hit the ceiling.

"Yuh—yuh—yessah!" grunted Mose.

"Yeah, bo!" replied Soup. "Squeak once and you're done."

"N-n-nosah," whispered Mose.

"Yessir," nodded Soup. "Move on, nigger."

Straight into the privacy of the Steele family came Mose and Soup; and the first hint of something wrong was when one of the bottles fell from its dizzy height, landed in the middle of the cardtable and shot it's agitated contents into the face of James Worthington Steele.

"What the ——?" Thus said James Worthington Steele, pawing the suds out of his eyes.

It was then that Mose Jones side-stepped and gave them an unobstructed view of Soup Lannigan, who was enjoying himself hugely.

"Don't yelp," advised Soup coldly. "C'mere, you!"

He meant Alicia. She came. The combination of automatic and Soup's face was enough to cow any one. Alicia sank into one of the seats and stared at Soup.

"Kinda pretty," observed Soup appreciatively. "Gimme the sparks, kid. You too—" turning to Mrs. Steele—"hand over them rings. Shell out your money and make it fast. I ain't got all day. C'mon! What the —— do yuh think this is; a lecture?"

They shelled. Soup held out his battered cap for the spoils and his eyes glittered. The hunting was much better than he anticipated. Mose Jones rolled his eyes and leaned against the wall, while his legs fairly twitched for a chance to run.

Far down the line the engine whistle signaled for the rear flagman to come in. Soup backed toward the rear door, his automatic covering the two men and two women.

"T'anks, folks," he said. "I'll be on me way now."

He laughed mockingly and backed into a man, who had come through the rear door, filling the passageway with his bulk. Soup spun around, tried to use his automatic, but this hulk of a man tore it from his hand, threw it out of the window and proceeded to mop up the open space with the luckless Soup.

Soup was no coward. He had fought many fights; but this fat person, who wore flapping leather chaps, spurs and a heavy belt, did not give him a chance. The cap, which contained the loot, went flying under a chair, when Slim Simpson got Soup by the legs, handling him like a wheelbarrow, and rammed him viciously into the underpinning of a heavy chair.

Soup went limp. Slim tossed Soup's legs aside, as if he had no further use for them, and stared at Alicia. Came the "bump" of some one boarding the car, and Sadie came in. Her face was streaked with dust, but in her eyes was a great resolve. She wasn't going to lose Slim Simpson, not without a battle. Slim gawped at her and waved his arms weakly.

"Huh—hello, Sadie," he panted, and then turned to the dazed Alicia.

"You—you tell her," he said dramatically, pointing at Sadie. "You tell huh-her about that wink. Hurry up, can'tcha?"

"The—that wink?" faltered Alicia wonderingly.

"You winked at me?" queried the perspiring Slim. "Back there at the depot, you winked."

"At you?" Alicia shook her head. "No. I—I didn't. It was a cinder in my eye."

"Now, yuh see?" Slim was triumphant. "Do yuh see——"

But just at that moment Soup Lannigan decided that it was a mighty good time for him to leave. He jumped to his feet, knocked Sadie aside and darted out of the rear door.

"Gosh ding him, he didn't stay dead!" blurted Slim; and out of the door he went.

Soup Lannigan, running like a rabbit, was heading for the brushy hills, when Slim went into his saddle, shook out his rope and gave chase. And Sadie was not far behind him.

Straight up over a brushy slope galloped Soup, bending every effort to gain deeper cover, while behind him pounded two running horses; and now he could hear the swish of a whirling loop. Again the engine whistled, as if cheering them on.

DOWN through a gully went Soup, where Slim was forced to detour; but a few moments later he was chased on to the next slope. For ten minutes they played hide-and-seek; but the hard riding cowboy won, when Soup essayed to cross a fifty foot stretch of open country to gain a mesquite patch.

The loop caught Soup in mid-air and brought him down on his neck in a cat-claw bush.

The jerk of the rope knocked all the fight out of the hard-faced yegg, who was content to lie there and goggle at the sky. Slim kept the rope tight and waited for Sadie to join him.

"What are you goin' to do with him, Slim?" asked Sadie.

"Huh! I dunno. Prob'ly turn him over to them folks."

"Did you know it was a holdup, Slim, dear?" asked Sadie.

"Shore. Didn't you know it? Somebody wired to yore dad at San Rego, tellin' him that there was a holdup."

Soup Lannigan sat up, staring blankly. Some one had wired about the holdup? His little eyes batted violently.

"Get up," ordered Slim.

Soup got up, his arms pinned to his sides.

"Vamoose toward the train, *hombre.*"

Soup knew better than to argue. It was quite a way back to the train, but Soup led the way, his head hanging with weariness, while behind him came Slim and Sadie, riding close together. Over the brow of the hill they came—and stopped.

There was no train!

"It has went!" exclaimed Slim. "Whatcha know about that?"

From a mile or so away came the whistle of the freight, as it clattered its way on to Mesquite City.

"They didn't wait for us," complained Slim.

"We don't care, do we?" asked Sadie softly.

Slim looked at her and a grin twisted his lips.

"Yuh see how it was, don'tcha, Sadie?" he asked. "It was jist a cinder. The wind jist blowed a cinder back with the smoke and it got in her eye. That's all it was."

"I—I know it, Slimmie. I was to blame. I—I—it looked just like a wink, you see."

"Yeah, it did," admitted Slim. "But I knowed that it wasn't, Sadie."

"Well, I'm glad we found out," said Sadie, sighing with relief. "Let's go home, Slimmie. Ma's got apple pie for supper."

"What about me?" asked Soup painfully.

"You?" Slim twitched the rope and the loop fell around the feet of the yegg.

"Yeah—about me?" Thus Soup anxiously.

"You don't interest me none," declared Slim. "Step out of that loop and rattle yore hocks out of here; *sabe?*"

Soup did. He ran all the way to the track, where he began counting ties toward Mesquite City. He stopped and looked back. Slim and Sadie were heading back toward San Rego, riding very close together.

Soup Lannigan dug out a very limp sack of tobacco and a crumpled cigaret paper.

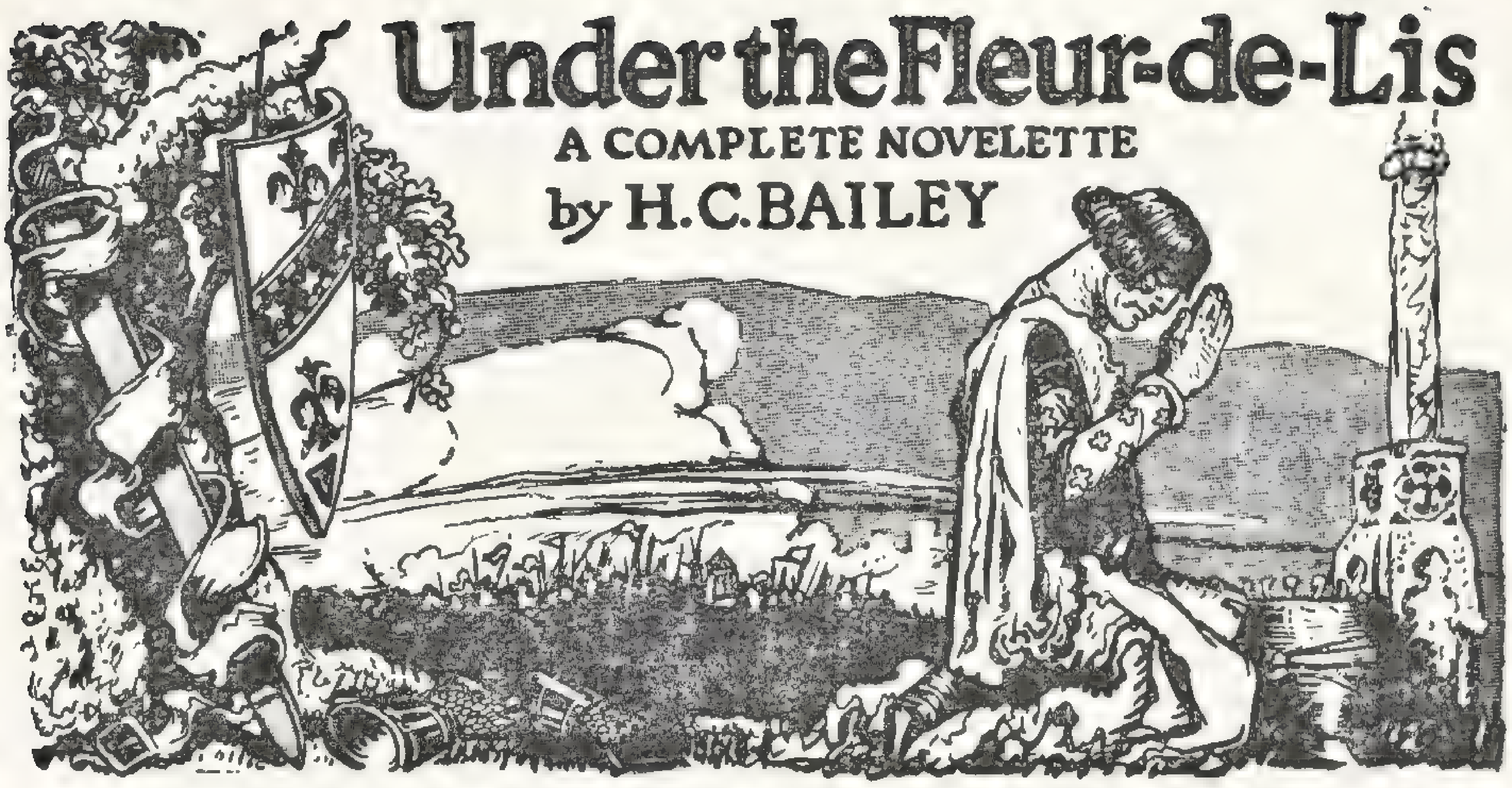
"Don't it beat ——?" he asked the wide world, as he carefully rolled a smoke. "Don't it beat —— a mile? I don't know what it was all about, but I got a laugh out of that cinder that come back with the smoke.

"This —— road burns oil!"

Under the Fleur-de-Lis

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

by H. C. BAILEY



Author of "The Moor of Milan," "The Babes in the Wood," etc.

THE sun was setting, the peaks of the Apennines rose dark into a sky of flame and the plain lay in golden light. Silvain came by the road under the foothills singing his evening psalm.

"An offering of a free heart will I give thee and praise thy name, O Lord, because it is so comfortable. For He hath delivered me out of all my trouble ——"

Men ran upon him from a hollow in the hills and caught his bridle and bade him stand.

"—and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies." Silvain made an end of his psalm and drew his sword, and a hundred yards behind Messire Thibaut gave a howl and charged to help.

"Here is nothing for you but steel," said Silvain mildly. "Who has a lust to die?"

There were half a dozen about him, sturdy rascals, armed with dagger and sword, and they laughed at him.

"Put up your iron, my master. If you strike, it is you who go down. We are many on one and as many more as you need.

"I do not doubt you," Silvain smiled. "But consider: If I go down some of you will go down with me. It is not worth while for me or for you."

He was still speaking when he drove spurs into his horse and struck with the flat of his sword at the hands on the bridle and the horse plunged and broke from them, and Thibaut rode into the midst and drove a way through.

But Silvain turned and halted as soon as he was clear.

"Whose men are you?" he cried. "I am Silvain de St. Lo."

Then one man grumbled in French, "Blood of God, he is a Frenchman!" and they made off.

"By my faith, this is not to end so," Silvain said and rode after them. "Bring me to your master."

They stared back at him, bewildered and sulky, but led on through the folds of the hills and Silvain followed close. And he put on his helmet and took his shield from where it hung behind him and rode on ready with naked sword.

"Now will I make a good end, as the bull said when he tossed the butcher's boy and ran into the slaughter house," quoth Messire Thibaut.

In a little way they saw men riding on the hillside who halted as they were seen and one shouted—

"How now, Jacques? Who do you bring me; or is it he who brings you? The —— take you, you come like driven sheep." He too spoke French.

"Sir, are you the shepherd of these sheep?" Silvain cried.

"'Ware wolf, lad, 'ware wolf!" the answer came with an oath.

"I am Silvain de St. Lo."

The other stared and rode forward lifting his hand in salute. "——, you are welcome. I am Gilbert du Marais. What have you brought us, brother?"

"A sword, sir. Your men stopped me on the road and I seek their master. I pray you choose your ground. There is light enough yet for us to prove ourselves."

Gilbert laughed.

"I like that. That is the right stuff. But no thank you I will not fight you, not I. Dog does not hunt dog. We are Frenchmen both."

"Sir, I am sorry for it."

"Peace, lad, peace. Here is no fair fighting. Silvain de St. Lo is a better sword than I. I know it and the —— knows I am in no haste to die. But look you, if you make an end of me, here are men enough who will have your blood for mine. No, child. I will not let you run upon death.

"Come, what is your quarrel with me? They stopped you on the road? It is their trade, the dogs. Why, they took you for one of these Italian city soldiers who are all money and no sword. What are we here for but to shear the sheep of Italy? But the —— burn me, the lads were blind not to know a knight of France. I ask your pardon, Silvain, and there is an end." He held out his hand.

"If you please," Silvain said and took it and Messire Thibaut was heard to give a great sigh.

"Good fellow," Gilbert cried. "Come on with me and I will show you merry cheer. ——! it warns my heart to have Silvain de St. Lo of our company."

In this manner Silvain met Gilbert du Marais who brought him to Philibert de la Vire which made for him the best day of his life and the worst.

WHERE the hills rise toward the mountains they came in the twilight to the ruins of a castle. From a shapeless mound of fallen stone the black walls rose broken and jagged. But Gilbert kept his word. He had good quarters and good cheer. Though the castle hall was covered with a low roof of planks and shut in by a patchwork of curtains, something between a hut and a tent, it had rich furniture and plate and the tables were laden with spiced meats and all the wines of Lombardy.

"Do we not live like kings, brother?" Gilbert chuckled with his mouth full of ortolan, and Silvain said that King Charles had no better fare.

"He has worse, I swear," said Philibert de la Vire. "Well, a man must take what he earns."

Silvain was sitting between them and he looked from one to the other. Gilbert spread himself, a loose-made, careless fellow, taking his pleasure of the moment and there was nothing to be seen in his red face but sensual good will. His cousin Philibert was a little man, low of brow and cunning of eye, greedy in his ways, but finding no satisfaction, like a peasant driving a bargain, a hard little man and gloomy.

Silvain asked him if he had news of the king and the army of France. "—— a word have I heard," said Gilbert and drank to French swords and King Charles.

"And God send him a horse with a good wind," said Philibert.

"What sir? Is the army in retreat? I did not know that."

"Nor did I. But I can guess. If a man goes rabbiting where wasps nest, he will soon be running."

"Drink again, cousin," Gilbert laughed and passed the wine along. "See your luck through the wine, it is none so black."

"Nor is the king's," said Silvain. "He has won many a victory and none stand against him."

"What has he won?" Philibert growled. "Glory and smoke, poor loon, glory and smoke."

Gilbert chuckled. Silvain stared.

"Sir, you make me wonder," he said. "If you think the king is in danger why do you linger here? If you fear the venture that he has chosen why did you come so far?"

"And you may wonder," Philibert's little eyes twinkled. "There are many things you will wonder in this world, Sir Silvain. Men are not all fools."

Gilbert struck in quickly to make peace. Between more wine and gross stories and coarse songs Silvain heard some of Gilbert's philosophy. Italy was a —— good country if a man knew how to use it. But that way was not the king's way of marching with an army. Nothing in that but glory and smoke as Cousin Philibert said. But a brisk company watching the high roads could make a duke's ransom every week. No such country as Italy for fat merchants' caravans and fine lords and ladies who had guards that would not fight. Why then, no such country for lusty Frenchmen.

The two cousins and their men, it

emerged from Gilbert's chatter had marched into Italy with King Charles, meaning to grow rich by a war of plunder. When they found that the king was engaged on a military display they withdrew from the army and made a private war on the travelers of Lombardy. And thus they throve in safety.

While the French king was parading his arms all down Italy the Italian cities dared not squander men to go fighting a band of soldiers of fortune. If the king got into trouble and had to retreat, Sir Gilbert and Sir Philibert were so near the mountains that they could be off to France with his vanguard.

"It is a neat thing, lad, it is a neat thing," Gilbert clapped Silvain on the shoulder. "Do you want your share? Why, we have done well, but the —— doubt we should do better with a knight like Silvain in our company. There are pretty ventures, you rogue. And booty enough for three. I do not grudge you, not I."

"Sir, I ride on," Silvain said.

Philibert laughed—

"That is his life! He rides on."

"Not to-night, lad," said Gilbert, and poured more wine for him and struck up another song.

They sat late and again and again Gilbert plied him with offers to join them. It became clear to Silvain that there was some reason why he should not be allowed to go away. He yawned and asked leave to sleep.

Gilbert took a man and a lantern and led him among the ruins to a tower which was still sound.

"We lie here and there in this old place," he explained, as they climbed the stair, "but this is good quarters, lad." He held up the lantern in a room which had much furniture. "This was a pretty lady's bower," he chuckled. "Dream of her, Silvain."

He set down the lantern and went off singing a ribald song as Thibaut came with their gear.

"There is good wine in this place, lord," Messire Thibaut grinned and yawned and stretched himself out on the floor. "God make me as full tomorrow. Amen."

But Silvain put down the lantern on the table so that no light showed and went to the window. He saw a man take post at the door of the tower on guard.

Then he turned and said, "Do not sleep, brother," and Thibaut groaned.

Silvain watched that man on guard till he had his measure and then lay down on the floor by Thibaut and with his lips at Thibaut's ear, "Is there a watch on the horses?" he whispered.

"One man watches the horse lines."

Silvain went back to the window and listened till all was quiet. Then he stole down the stair. The sentry was lounging in the doorway. He heard something, turned and heard nothing—for Silvain stood still, hidden in the curve of the stairway—and turned again to lounge. A fist in an iron gauntlet grasped his mouth and a dagger hilt struck his temple. He was stunned and senseless without a sound. Silvain carried him up and tied him in a bundle of bedclothes.

They took their gear and made for the horse lines. As soon as they saw through the darkness dark shapes in rank Messire Thibaut dropped down flat with the turf and crept on. Silvain stopped and found a stone and threw it. One of the horses plunged and kicked. The sentry ran to quiet it. While he was busy Thibaut came near and rising suddenly behind him brought him to the ground with a cloak over his head. Silvain ran in, and the man was tied up in the heelropes with a peg to bite on. And they saddled and made off.

"Pity me," Thibaut groaned. "What is all this, lord?"

"Gilbert did not tell me, brother," Silvain laughed. "But I think that he will."

With the stars for a guide they made their way back to the road, and there Thibaut slept and Silvain watched till dawn. As soon as he had light enough to see far he took Thibaut and the horses and hid them in a fold of the hills and himself chose a place on the high ground whence he could watch the way to the castle.

HE HAD not long to wait. Gilbert and Philibert came with all their company and came in haste.

"All these for me, friend?" Silvain said. "You do me too much honour."

Philibert went on and reconnoitered while the rest halted. Then they moved forward slowly. The mass of them went into hiding in the broken ground by the road. Men on foot scattered on either side of it and lay down. Two or three horsemen spurred southward some way and vanished.

"Alas, it is not for me," said Silvain. "This is the secret venture that would be spoiled if I rode away with news of it. But I did ride away and still he ventures. A brave Gilbert! Well, you have laid a pretty ambush. Who is to fall into it, Gilbert? Fare you well, I go to see."

He stole down to the horses and Thibaut, and they mounted and worked round among the hills till they came on the road far to southward and out of sight of the sentries of Gilbert.

But they had come too far. Between them and the ambush a long train of horsemen with baggage mules and litters was going leisurely on to destruction. Silvain galloped after it holding up his hand. It halted, a knight came out from it and met him.

"Who is your captain?" Silvain cried. "I am Silvain de St. Lo, a knight of France."

"I am the captain of the guard of my lord of Mantua. Do you come from the King of France?"

Silvain saw the wrinkled scarred face of an old soldier of fortune look at him cunningly.

"I come from myself. My news is that you are in danger."

The Mantuan looked round at his men at arms and laughed, and Silvain went on:

"Sir, you know what you have with you that is worth taking. I know that three miles away there is an ambush laid to take it. There are forty men against you. If you can break through, go your way and God be with you. I have done my part."

The Mantuan pulled his lip.

"Forty?" he said. "Frenchmen?"

"God made them French, sir. The devil made them rogues."

The Mantuan looked along the road, looked at the broken ground and made up his mind.

"Good thanks, sir. I go back," and he shouted orders. But in the midst of them a woman's voice called him. He made a grimace. "Come sir, tell your tale, I pray you," he said and brought Silvain to a litter borne by mules.

Its curtains were drawn back. The woman in it had raised herself on her cushions. Silvain saw a dainty face made piquant by the mocking curve of the mouth. It would have been fragile but for the breadth of brow. It would have been too fair but for the violet darkness of the eyes.

"Why do we loiter, Taddeo?" she said, and looked at Silvain.

"Here is a French knight come to tell there is a French ambush set for us. I turn back, my lady."

"Why does he forsake his friends to serve me?" her eyes were steady on Silvain.

"They are no friends of mine who bring shame on France," Silvain answered. "For the honor of France I must save you, lady."

"And so for the honor of France I am to run away. I thank you, sir. Do you know who I am?"

"I know that you are a woman." Silvain bowed. "That commands all of me."

"I am Isabella d'Este, sir," she cried.

And Silvain smiled as he bowed again for he understood the anxieties of Gilbert and Philibert. Isabella d'Este was as great a lady as any in Italy and the wife of the Marquis of Mantua, a potent prince and a soldier of fame. She would be a splendid capture. The man who had her to sell might ask what he chose of Italy or France.

But she was not pleased with that smile.

"Oh, you are merry! It is a jest that I can not come to my own city but must turn and run from your French brigands."

"By my faith I do not bid you turn back. I say there are forty men in ambush to capture you. Here are more than forty with you. If they have heart for it they may break through and bring you on. But if you do not trust them it is time to turn and be gone."

She looked at Taddeo but he shook his cautious head. "My lady, I dare not bring you into danger. I have to answer for you to your lord."

"You shall answer for it if you turn back," she cried. "I go on, Taddeo, I go on if I go alone. March, sirrah!"

"Oh lady, you are too bold," Silvain laughed. "Here is only one captain and that is not you." He saluted to Taddeo. "At your orders, sir." And he drew away from her making Taddeo's horse move too. "Now let us order it."

"What the —— am I to do with her?" Taddeo muttered. "You see what she is."

"Let her stay where she is," Silvain said. "Leave a dozen men and the rest of us try our fortune. If it goes ill they can bring her off. But I think it will not go ill."

"The men are well enough," said Taddeo. "They will fight out a fight. But there is no fire in them and your Frenchmen are fiends."

The end of that talk was that they left the angry lady on the road and marched on with most of the baggage. Taddeo and all his unmounted men, who had pikes and swords, and the baggage and some of the horsemen kept the road. Silvain picked out a dozen who were young and well mounted and led them off by the way he had come through the hills.

SO THE sentries of Gilbert and Philibert saw at last the expected Mantuan company. It marched with a couple of horsemen ahead, a guard of horsemen in the rear, and in the midst a long train of mules and litters with pikemen marching on either side. There beyond doubt was the lady Isabella. The first horsemen were suffered to pass. When the mule train came, Gilbert and Philibert broke out of ambush. The pikemen were ready, turned and stood shoulder to shoulder, a line of spears on either side the litters.

"Away, you sheep," Gilbert roared as he charged. "Break them, break in!"

And Philibert and he and one or two more charged through the spears but the most of his men, unarmored, flinched from the steady line or could not break it.

Then came a shout from their rear, "Mantua! Mantua!" and the thunder of galloping horses and while they wondered and faltered and turned, bewildered what this might be, from the ground where they had lain in ambush fresh men charged on them shouting "Mantua! Mantua!"

That was the end of Gaston's company. It reeled and broke and the cautious Taddeo came up and flung in his reserve to sweep it away. Scattered into single horsemen, leaving many fallen on the road, it fled back into the hills.

Silvain halted and took off his helmet.

"I wonder if he knew me, the brave Gilbert," he smiled.

Taddeo's trumpet sounded the rally. Taddeo was in a hurry to form his column again and be off. The lady and her guard were brought up, he gave the word to march and rode beside her.

"Rest at ease, my lady. There is no more to fear of them. They are broken men. It went hard for a while, but I have my pikes well drilled and they stood to it till I could develop my tactic. Then the thing was done. The truth is they have no science, these Frenchmen. They are bold in the charge but they do not know how to order a fight."

"Where is our Frenchman?" said the lady.

"Oh, he is gone on with the advance guard. It is a wild youth," Taddeo smiled indulgently. "He must wear out many a horse. He ranges to and fro like a dog. But I do not fear to trust him."

"That is gracious," said the lady. "Then you will give me leave to speak with him? Bid him come."

But Silvain did not come. He was resolved that the lady should fall into no other ambush and he rode far ahead of Taddeo's stolid column, searching the ground. It was not till the walls of Mantua were in sight that he halted beside the road and waited for her litter. From the town where her family ruled a troop was riding out to meet her. Taddeo saw it and barked out orders that set his men dressing their ranks and marching stiffly.

Silvain and Thibaut sitting at ease on their tired horses watched the column go by. When the golden litter came Silvain drew his sword and saluted the lady. She did not see him at first for she lay back on the cushions and Taddeo was riding at her side. Then she raised herself on her elbow.

"Bid them halt, Taddeo," she cried and beckoned to Silvain. "Why do you sit there like a statue, my friend?" she said. "I bade you come to me long ago."

"I am your servant, lady. I was watching the road. And here the road ends. I pray you give me leave to kiss your hand."

"Forward, Taddeo," she signed to him to let Silvain come to her. The column began to move. "And what is your road, my friend?"

"I go my way to seek honor."

She smiled. "There is none by my side?"

"By my faith, I am proud that I ride here."

"Yes, you are proud," she said, considering him. "I also have some pride, my friend. You have brought me safe out of a vile danger. What shall I give you for that?"

"I pray you, give me your hand to kiss."

A man came riding fast down the column, a sturdy fellow in a rich array of blue and red and gold. He bowed low to the lady and swung his horse round to her.

"My heart gives you welcome," he cried. Silvain reined back and gave him place beside her.

"It is good to come," she said softly and their eyes spoke together.

"Each day that I wait for you is a longer day."

"I have had the longer days to bear." They smiled at each other and then she turned from him. "I come late, sir. I have had a war to fight to come to you. I should not be here for you tonight but by this French lord's grace." She made him look back at Silvain. "He has delivered me out of the hand of the French. My lord Marquis, this is Sir Silvain de St. Lo. I pray you honor him for my sake, who indeed deserves all honor for his own."

The marquis bowed.

"Sir, I have heard of many deeds of Silvain de St. Lo and envied him. I am proud to stand his debt."

"Here is no debt, my lord. To serve your lady would be service that pays itself richly. But what I could do was little matter. She was her own captain," Silvain smiled.

"I think it is no little matter that a knight of France should ride against Frenchmen. Sir, you had a hard choice. You have chosen like a noble knight. But we are fortunate."

So they brought him to Mantua and made him their guest in the palace and showed him stately courtesy. The place was full of princelings and their gentlemen and their captains and many eyes looked askance at the Frenchman but the Marquis of Mantua had the will to see that his pleasure was law.

"What shall be done to the man that the marquis delighteth to honor?" said Messire Thibaut, who throve on palace fare. "Surely he has some great thing for us, lord."

"I fear it, brother," Silvain smiled.

BEFORE a week was out it came. He was beckoned out of the company in the great hall of audience to the room where the marquis sat alone. "We have seen too little of you in these busy days, sir. Believe that you have been often in my mind."

"Sir, you have been too kind to me."

"I have done nothing. You did for me what a man does not forget. Sir Silvain—I think you are bound to no lord."

"It is true. I am my own man."

"I should count myself happy if you would ride with me. I go upon a great venture, sir. I take command of the armies of a league to save Italy."

Silvain drew a long breath.

"From the King of France, my lord?" he said.

"Yes. As you saved my wife from his brigands, I hope that I may save Italy from him."

"My king is no brigand, my lord."

"I judge him by his acts. The work he has done in Italy is brigand's work. He snatches at our towns, he claims lordship of our lands, he seeks to make himself a realm in our country. Your king? Why, you can not serve such a king. You know it."

"I am a knight of France, my lord. To France I must be loyal, or I am nothing."

"His cause is no cause for you, Silvain. You know it well. You have been long in Italy. You do not ride with him. You have to fight against the rogues who march under his banner. Come, fight with me and deliver the land from evil. Is it a good cause? Your heart knows."

Silvain smiled sadly.

"What should I answer you, my lord? I think your heart knows that."

"What has he brought upon Italy? Rapine and death and outrage for men and women who had done him no wrong. We gather and march to defend our right. God is for us. He can not stand against us, this robber's king. But the fight will go hard and we need every knight's aid. Come Silvain, here is honor to win."

"Not for me, my lord," Silvain said. "If all you say is true, why then my place is now with the king."

"No by God's grace. You would not march with him to plunder us. It is not for you to defend him when we rally to take vengeance."

"By my faith, it is in that day I must fight for him. I had no part in his victories. I dare not stand aside if he marches on defeat."

"Why, this is mad loyalty. You will take the wrong cause because it goes to ruin."

Silvain looked up.

"Is that mad, my lord? I think your heart does not say so. I am a knight of France and if France has evil days I must bear my part."

"Go your way, you have chosen," the marquis said. "God guide you, Silvain." And Silvain went out with bowed head.

That night there came to him servants who brought him armor of Milan steel and a gold chain worked in the cypher of the lady Isabella and he was told that my lord had ordered two chargers to be stabled with his.

Then Messire Thibaut chuckled and rubbed his hands.

"This is a noble lord. Surely he has some great place for us."

"Noble he is, brother," Silvain smiled. "For he arms me against himself."

The jaw of Thibaut fell and he groaned.

"You turn against him? Alas, my bones, we never had fortune yet but Silvain must seek a way to lose it. What irks you here? This lord has been gentle and gracious, a sweet lord, and I will go bail for him he is one to trust."

"O brother, he is the noblest prince that ever I knew. But he marches against the army of France and I must turn my sword upon him and be his enemy."

"Why?" said Thibaut. "France never gave you anything that you should lose all for her. Look, lord. France has sent her army to the —— but you did not choose to go with them. Then why the —— go after them now?"

"France is our mother," Silvain said.

"Pity poor me," Thibaut moaned. "Oh Silvain, my lord, you have an uncomfortable soul. When you go to heaven you will turn upon God to fight for the poor souls in hell."

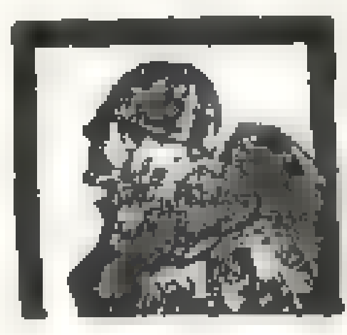
But Silvain had his way, and so nobly armed and mounted they rode out from Mantua in the dawn and made southward to find King Charles.

It was a journey that asked some skill. For all the roads had grown busy. People of importance and their escorts were going to and fro between Rome and Florence and Venice and Milan and all these cities and Modena and Mantua. Troops were on the march too, levies of citizens, bands of hired soldiers of fortune; Germans and Swiss as well as Italians, all suspicious, most of them eager for a quarrel or seeking, as Thibaut moaned, what they might devour. But Messire Thibaut quaked too soon for Silvain found a way through them peaceably, shunning a challenge, giving place rather than give offence; irresistibly meek and supple.

"God have mercy," said Thibaut, "his head is bowed and his mouth is shut and he has no joy. So have I seen a man when the shadow of death fell cold upon him."

But Silvain pushed on fast and came through the Apennines and beyond Pisa and there in the country by the sea saw the banners of the French army.

He was kneeling by a wayside shrine to give thanks when horsemen rode out from the vanguard and challenged him and brought him to their captain.



A KNIGHT who sat tall on a great charger shaded his eyes to look. Silvain cried out "Bayard!" and galloped on. "I said in my heart that it would be you, brother. There is none but Bayard to lead the vanguard of France."

Bayard grasped at his hand.

"Oh my brother, this should be your place."

Silvain shook his head and smiled.

"You have been my captain in my heart many a year now. I have prayed often that I might be such a knight as you are."

"God has given you better fortune."

"Richer, not better," Bayard said. "But what now? Tell me, have you come to us at last?"

"At last, that is the word. Yes, I have come to ride for France. I pray you, Bayard, let me serve with you."

"With me?" Bayard laughed. "Where I am there is always a place for you. But the king will need you for something greater."

"I look for no welcome, Bayard. I bring no good news." He lowered his voice. "My fear is that I have come too late."

Bayard stared at him.

"This is not like you, brother," he said. "What fear rides with you that you look so heavily?"

"How is it in the army? Are you strong and in good heart?"

Bayard smiled.

"Do not fear for us. Our heads are high and our hearts. By Our Lady, we have a right to go proud. All is won that we marched to win. We have given our king a new realm and wide dominion. Our Lord Charles is anointed King of Naples and Emperor of the East and King of Jerusalem. He has put on the robe and crown of Byzant."

"And sovereignty of dreams," Silvain

said. "And now you turn back to France. How many men have you left behind, Bayard?"

"There are twelve thousand holding Naples," said Bayard.

Silvain turned in the saddle and looked back down the column of march and crossed himself and murmured a prayer.

"Fifty thousand came out of France," he said. "Here are no more than ten thousand. You have left many behind."

"It is true. They wasted away in Naples," Bayard said. "There was a sickness upon us. But many are gone here and there making free companies to seek fortune."

"And plunder Italy. By my faith, this was a noble venture, Bayard, and France has won much honor. For the king is made Emperor of the East and King of Jerusalem. God help him, when will he come to the Holy City? Dreams, dreams!"

"Are you here to speak evil of the king, Sir Silvain?" Bayard cried.

"Not I, brother. I am a knight of France and I ride to him in his need."

"You are gracious. He has won many victories without your sword. There are good swords to serve him yet."

"Bear with me, Bayard. I saw no honor in this venture. I held off in your victories. Now dangers gather about you I must ride with you. You march with ten thousand men. Beyond the mountains there fifty thousand marshaled to destroy you and a great captain to lead them, Francesco of Mantua."

Bayard laughed.

"Here is a noble fight for France! What, brother, why do you come heavily talking of fear and ill news? This is the best we have heard since we came into Italy. We could find never an army strong enough to prove our swords. God be thanked, here is hope of a deed of arms at last. Come, I must bring you to the king. Do not fear brother, you will be welcome."

While the army plodded on King Charles and his courtiers were halted in a great tent to rest through the heat of the day. His Majesty lolled upon cushions, drinking wine from a cup half filled with snow.

"It is Bayard, sir," said Etienne de Vesc, the favorite at his elbow. "He brings some stranger."

The king yawned and turned his big head.

"I bring Sir Silvain de St. Lo, my lord," said Bayard, and there was some stir in the drowsy company.

The king looked away like a surly child.

"I have nothing for him," he mumbled. "He is no knight of mine."

Then Etienne de Vesc said quickly—

"Name of God, Bayard, you take your duty lightly. Our vanguard has no captain while you bring your wandering friends to tease us."

"Will you teach Bayard a captain's duty, Sir Etienne?" Bayard said. "My lord, Sir Silvain has great news for you."

"Well, what is it?" the king cried peevishly. "What is it? Speak out and have done."

"Great news it is, my lord," Silvain said. "I dare not call it good news. There is a strong league gathered to give you battle, Venice and Florence and the Pope's men and Mantua and all the states of the north. Even your friend Lodovico of Milan has turned against you."

"——!" said the Marshal d'Esquerdes, who was the king's second favorite. "I always said that man was a knave."

But Etienne de Vesc cried out—

"Fie, this is all known. This is not news. Do you think to win favor by this stale stuff?"

"When was it known? I did not know it," said d'Esquerdes. "Look, my lord, if all this is true we march too slow."

"All this is true and more. The emperor has sent them men, my lord, Germans and Switzers, and they gather a great host and Francesco of Mantua leads them."

"The Mantuan! Name of ——, they have the best captain in Italy," d'Esquerdes cried. "Where do they muster, sir?"

"South of Modena, sir. They gather toward the Apennines. I fear they watch the passes."

"I swear they will. How many men?"

"By my faith, I count them fifty thousand."

"The —— you do!" D'Esquerdes turned to the king. "Do you know what I think, my lord? I think you lie there too long."

The king started up—

"March then, march. I do not keep you. By Our Lady, I am not afraid of them, I!"

"No, sier, but here are some who fear shadows, or would have you fear," said Etienne de Vesc. "Who is this knight that knows so much of the enemy? Who sent him?"

A LOOSE-MADE man thrust forward. Silvain saw the red face of Gilbert du Marais grin at him.

"I can tell you that, Sir Etienne," Gilbert cried. "This knight spied upon us when we laid an ambush to seize the Lady of Mantua to be a hostage for her lord and brought the Mantuans down upon us and delivered her. But for him we should have had her safe and my lord of Mantua would not dare to lead his league against France."

"Why, the man is a traitor!" cried Etienne.

"He fights for Mantua, not France. Bear me witness, Philibert." Gilbert turned and thrust his cousin forward.

"He fought for the lady," Philibert's little eyes glowed. "He delivered her. He broke our company. He tricked us."

"Look at him!" Gilbert laughed, for Silvain stood pale and silent. "He dares not deny it. He is a Mantuan—no Frenchman."

Silvain flung back his head.

"By my faith, I did not think I should live to hear a French knight boast to his king of your deeds. This is true: You did lay an ambush to capture the Lady of Mantua and I found it out and delivered her." He turned upon the king. "I pray you my lord, is this your way of war that you would have your knights lie in wait for a woman and take her to hold her at their will?"

"What do you say?" The king rolled his big head. "I know nothing of it. It is all folly."

"Folly and worse," said Etienne de Vesc. "Here is one who would be on both sides. He fights for Mantua. He comes to tell tales of Mantua. Go your way, sirrah, the king wants no men of two faces."

"Sir," said Bayard. "It was I who brought Sir Silvain to my lord."

Then the Marshal d'Esquerdes cried—

"Do you answer for him, Bayard?"

"Sir, his honor is my honor," Bayard said.

The Marshal laughed—

"——, Etienne, it will be long before you have such warranty," and the King, too, cackled laughter. "Hear my mind, my lord. This news is true and I thank God we have it. For we must march and march fast or the rogues will gather and hold the passes against us and we shall be trapped in the mountains and never win out.

"Name of God, how can the man be false? He bids us march on to France and march fast and that is right soldierly reason. But if a man says there is nothing to fear and we can wait and take our ease, I hear Italian gold clink in his pockets." He looked with a sneering smile at Etienne and Gilbert. "To the —— with all traitors. This knight is true!" he clapped Silvain on the shoulder. "Let us march, my lord!"

Then one man and another cried out, "Forward, forward," and Etienne de Vesc held his tongue and the king said angrily, "Forward, then. It is not I who fear. Why are we kept here? To horse!"

Bayard took Silvain's arm and drew him away.

"This was a mean welcome, brother. Patience yet and you shall shame them."

"I have done my part," Silvain said. "I am content. But I should have done nothing without you, Bayard." They found their horses and mounted. "May I serve in your company?"

"You serve who should lead."

Silvain smiled. "I have ridden alone all my days. I am no leader. But I would ride under the lilies before I die and I think I can serve France yet. You will need every sword."

"Your heart is heavy, brother. What do you fear? There are no troops in Italy will stand against a French charge. We shall win great glory of this host."

There rose up before Silvain a vision of Philibert's low brow and his little gloomy eyes and he heard Philibert's growl—

"What has he won, poor loon? Glory and smoke."

Bayard looked at him curiously. "What is in your mind? It is not like you to go sad upon danger."

"I think of the men about the king. When I told you of danger, your heart was glad. But there was no joy in that tent, Bayard."

"It is true. They treated you vilely. Bad blood thrives in a court. You have had evil fortune, Silvain." He smiled indulgent sympathy. "But you will ride on lonely ventures. It makes you enemies."

"I live my life, brother," Silvain smiled. "No matter for me. Who leads the army? Not you nor I. Your little king? He will be a child all his days. He is in the hands of men who send him to war that they may fill their pockets."

"I must not hear this," Bayard said coldly. "This is treason."

"What? To say that Etienne's men are brigands? You heard them boast of it. To say that Etienne takes bribes from the king's enemies? The marshal told him so before the king's face and he had no answer. Who leads the army? This knave at the king's ear, who will keep the army dallying till the Italians have trapped it in the mountains and so earn his bribes."

"I will not believe you," Bayard cried. "Etienne is greedy and mean of heart but no traitor. But what if he were? The marshal commands and he drives hard. We shall march fast enough, have no fear, and the army is staunch. ——, there is no traitor can trap the army of France!"

"I pray God you are right," Silvain said sadly.

"Why, man, there is no heart in you. You are turned to cunning and bitterness."

"I think I grow old, Bayard," Silvain said gently. "You have a boy's heart yet."

"Oh, brother, keep your loyalties!" Bayard cried.

One thing Silvain had forgotten, the desire of men to save themselves. What was said in council in that army was not long secret and when that story of a league of enemies passed through the ranks every man was zealous to push on into safety. The marshal had no need to drive them though he drove hard and they marched through the Italian summer, ruthless to themselves and their horses, unwearying.

They had cannon, unwieldy as guns were then, in the youth of artillery. When the teams gave out they dragged those fourteen pieces by man power. Great lords took their share of pulling and hauling, knights who had counted it loss of honor to go afoot trudged in their armor that weary pikemen might ride. And the mass of the army labored on up the steep broken tracks from dawn to dark, straining strength and will to the uttermost.

"Do you fear yet, brother?" Bayard said. "We march like Frenchmen. Like Frenchmen we shall fight."

"It is an army," Silvain smiled and tossed back his fair hair and looked up at the peaks of the Apennines. "I wish I knew what they are doing on the other side of the hills. Give me leave, Bayard and I will go and see."

"Let them do what they will, we shall break them."

Silvain was startled. "That is a soldier's thought not a captain's, Bayard."

"I do what I have to do," said Bayard coldly. "I do not think of the other side of the hill. And I have not failed in a fight yet."

"You are the most gallant knight of us all," Silvain said. "But see, brother: It will save many a life to know what they intend against us. Let me go."

"You try to see too far. You always seek to be wiser than any man. How often has that sent you on a lonely venture, Silvain? And little honor it has brought. Ride on with us and do your part when the hour comes."

"And so I will. O Bayard, my brother, it is not my honor I think of but the honor of France. Here is her army marching blind and we can save many a man for her. Let me go."

"Do as you will," said Bayard coldly. "You are your own man."

THEN Silvain took Thibaut and his two spare horses and rode on into the mountains and traveling fast by mule tracks above the road they climbed on till there lay before them the green northern valleys and the dim plain of Lombardy. In the pass which comes down to the broad stream of the Parma they saw many troops.

Some time they spent wandering on the high ground till Silvain had made out that the mass of the army of the league was marshaled below.

"We shall never break through there, not though we were all paladins," he said. "And that is the road we go. Come, brother, there is always a way round."

He led away northward across one valley and another where no army could march till they came upon the defile that goes by Fornovo, a cleft in the mountains dividing into broad valleys which opened on the plain. And there were no troops at all.

"By my faith that gate stands open,’ ’he said. "My lord of Mantua has made sure which way we shall come. He is very sure!" And they turned their horses and rode back.

Dusk was falling when they came upon the army. High in the mountains it lay in bivouac, marked out by a ring of fires that glowed golden and red in the gloom and covered it with a cloud of smoke that hid the mountain peaks. Bayard was riding round his outposts and Silvain called to him from far off and galloped on without a challenge.

"Good fortune! I have found you soon. You have marched well, Bayard. I did not think you would have come so far."

"You do not think well of us. I know it," Bayard said.

"I think you are the finest troops in the world. But by my faith, this is far enough." He lowered his voice. "For you come the wrong way, Bayard. I have found the army of the League and they hold this road against you with all their strength."

"God be thanked," Bayard cried.

"God is with us, by my faith. I have found you in time. We must turn aside and take the road by Fornovo. They have no guard there. If we press on fast we shall win through and be safe in the plain. Bring me to the king, brother."

Bayard stared at him. "Turn aside, flinch from the enemy, shun battle—is this what you come to tell him?"

"If you go down to battle in the Parma valley they will hold you against the mountains and crush you to dust. They are five to one and all the good ground they hold. I have seen them. Why man, it is no shame to march another road. You would not break your lance against a castle wall."

"Name of God, I have not learnt to shun battle because the enemy are strong. When did you learn, Silvain? What has changed you? You do not speak with your own voice. This is craven."

Silvain drew in his breath. "It is Bayard who says that to me! You have known me long, brother."

"I do not know you now. You are all cunning and fears."

"God help me, I must do as I can," Silvain said and turned his horse and rode on through the bivouac.

To the king's tent he came and there begged to speak with the Marshal d'Esquerdes. That bustling man, when he heard there was news, would have brought him in to the king.

"I pray you walk apart with me, my lord. It is your head leads this army. Hear me and judge what you will do."

The marshal, well pleased with that, linked arms with him and they paced to and fro in the dark and Silvain told his tale.

There was none of Bayard's chivalry in the Marshal d'Esquerdes. He was a soldier who made war for gain and having gained all he could in Italy was intent on getting safe home with it. He had no notion of fighting a battle unless he could win. He had no zeal to fight any battle. He grasped at the chance of evading the army of the League.

One doubt only troubled him, whether the road by Fornovo was a good road, and when Silvain promised him that they would march as well that way as the other, he chuckled and swore that Silvain was a godsend.

"Fornovo for us, lad. We will be off with the dawn and march round them and they shall never see any of us but our dust. The —— speed them, we can outmarch all Italy once we are down in the plain."

He bustled off into the king's tent again. Silvain turned to find Thibaut at his elbow.

"How is it with him, lord?" Thibaut croaked.

"He trusts me, brother. He is for Fornovo. He has gone now to the King. He will have his way. He knows what he wants, and that is to save himself."

"Pity me, so do I. We are not all Bayards, lord. That is a mad knight. But I know one who is madder."

"I?" Silvain laughed. "God help me, I am cold and cunning enough."

"Yes, lord, when you think for others. But when you think for your own fortune, mad, mad as the saints in heaven." He shook his head sagely and sighed. "What must be, must. But here is a knuckle of ham." He made it peep coyly from his wallet kissing the neck of a bottle. "Do not thank me, lord. Thank the good God who made me a thief."

In the lee of a rock they ate that stolen supper and Thibaut lay down and snored to the stars. But Silvain was wakeful. He watched the king's tent whence no man had come since the marshal went in. The marshal came out at last with half a dozen more and he was talking so fast and loud that none of them could put a word in, and the burden of his speech was that the Marshal d'Esquerdes was a great captain, and they would march by Fornovo and he would bring them safe off and a great captain was he. They vanished into the gloom and the clatter of his voice died slowly away.

"He has a will as loud as he is," Silvain reflected. "He has won. But he had to fight for it. He is hot yet." He sighed. "Alas, poor king! You have knaves to your friends. Alas, poor France! Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child."

Other men came out from the tent, not so noisy as the marshal, debating whether he was right or wrong and Silvain heard a voice that he knew.

"——, he is a Marshal of France," said Gilbert du Marais. "Let him lead, the king has said it and so say I."

"The short way home is the way for me," said Philibert.

Then Etienne de Vesc spoke softly, something that made men laugh. But Gilbert cried out:

"You are wise, my lord, —— doubt you, you are wise. You may be right for what I know and the marshal has listened to rogues. But this is sure. The marshal is to lead and we must follow. Heart of God. I ride with him though we ride to the ——."

"Well said, cousin," Philibert chuckled and there was a murmur of approval.

"The blind lead the blind." Etienne said softly. "Beware of the ditch, my lords."

They went their several ways and Etienne went with Gilbert and Philibert.

"What now?" Silvain said to himself. "Gilbert and Philibert stand out loyal to the marshal—that is strange—and their patron prophesies ruin and yet cherishes them kindly, that is most strange. What comes of it?"

STEALTHILY, avoiding the rings of fire light, he followed them. They stood together awhile in the darkness. Then Etienne turned and came back to the king's tent alone.

Gilbert and Philibert strode on to the horse lines and Silvain heard the creak of saddle leather.

It was enough for him. He made haste through the sleeping camp. His own horses were far away by Bayard's outposts. Before he was mounted Gilbert and Philibert had a long start. He was checked by Bayard's wary sentries and lost more time before he could get leave to pass, by a pretence that the marshal sent him.

There was no hope in rousing Bayard. Bayard would never help him again. No use to give the alarm and shout that two knights had fled to join the enemy. None but the marshal himself would dare act against the friends of Etienne de Vesc. To find him, to persuade him, while Etienne was giving a dozen good reasons why they were gone would waste the night. And they would be safe away and nothing proved or sure.

"O Bayard, my brother, here is another lonely venture," he laughed sadly as he rode on into the dark. For he had never a doubt what he must do.

Gilbert and Philibert had declared themselves on the marshal's side against Etienne in order that no one should suspect them of deserting to betray the marshal. So Etienne could scoff at the marshal's plan and when he was betrayed and the army was led to disaster, no man could blame him or his.

A clever fellow, Master Etienne. In the hour when it seemed that the French had found a way to safety and left him no more chance of selling them, he devised a plan for their ruin which would enrich him and free him from all suspicion.

The marshal ordered the march by Fornovo. Etienne who had kept the king loitering while the Italians gathered against him would have had the army go into the Parma valley where the Italians waited for it. The marshal prevailed, so Etienne was sending on the news that the Italians might move round to Fornovo betimes. Thereafter with his pockets full of Italian gold Etienne would boast that he had always been for the Parma road and that if the king had listened he would have brought them safe off.

Thus Silvain read the maneuvers of the night. It was certain in his mind that Gilbert and Philibert were riding straight for the Parma valley. He had to gain upon them half an hour's ride, he had to find them in the dark, he had to stop them before they reached the Italian outposts.

One advantage only he had, that his days of riding to and fro had given him good knowledge of the mountains. That Gilbert and Philibert would go by the road, he had no doubt. No other way was easy or safe. But if he followed by the road he would wear his horse out before he caught them.

He turned away on a rough track steering by the stars and the loom of the mountain peaks and climbed for a high pass which the road forsook to find an easier way by a long circuit. When he saw below him again after many a mile the gray band of the road on a black shoulder of mountain he halted and listened and after a little heard the beat of hoofs. He had come in front of them, but they had good galloping ground before them and he a steep hill side.

He struck down on a long slant. They heard him, saw him—no help for that—and though they could not know who he was drove their horses on. But Silvain had chosen his line well, the slope fell easier, he came at the last in a sudden burst of speed and crashed into the second man shoulder to crupper and rode him down.

The other was well away while Silvain's horse staggered from the shock. The man on the ground roared:

"Help cousin, help. Stand by me. I am a dead man else. Turn, man, death and the ——, he is but one." So Gilbert, spitting and swearing and struggling to get free from his fallen horse.

Philibert halted and looked back and turned and rode at Silvain, bending low in the saddle, a little man hidden behind his horse's neck holding his sword like a lance. So he rushed on, but Silvain going easily leaned out of the saddle as he came and his sword sliding along Philibert's sword held it off and went into Philibert's neck between helmet and breastplate and pierced him through and through and thrust him from his horse. Down he fell while his horse rushed on and Silvain swung round upon Gilbert.

But Gilbert shrank from him crying:

"I yield myself. Have mercy. I am a knight and will pay a knight's ransom. Have mercy."

"I am Silvain de St. Lo. Come, stand by my stirrup or I will cut you down."

"Silvain!" Gilbert cried. "Why do you set upon us? —— this is wicked work. We ride out on the king's service and you——"

"What service?"

"Why, man, we were riding to find where these cursed Italians are marshaled."

Silvain laughed. "You will never find them, Gilbert."

"What do you say? God's death, you will not kill me now. I have yielded myself."

"You are my prisoner. I am sorry for it. Hold by my stirrup. March!"

"But Philibert! Do not leave him for the love of God."

"There is no help for Philibert. He chose death, Gilbert."

Gilbert groaned!

"Good St. Martin, pray for him. I have brought him to his death." He ran to the fallen man and lifted his head and cried, "Brother, forgive me!"

Silvain walking his horse up to them heard Philibert laugh faintly.

"It is as it is," Philibert gasped. "Go your way. I go mine. And the —— takes all."

"Silvain, of your grace," Gilbert cried. "His breastplate bites into the wound. Help me with him."

Silvain swung down and raised the little man while Gilbert fumbled with his armor.

"Name of God, he must not die in torment," Gilbert muttered. "So, so. Hold him a moment. So." And then he dived past Silvain, throwing him down upon the dying man and vaulted on Silvain's horse and dashed off into the night.

Silvain started up and heard Philibert's gasping laugh. "He is up and you are down," Philibert croaked. "What have you won? Come lie with me. The —— takes all."

Silvain ran seeking the loose horses in the dark, found one at last and galloped after Gilbert.

But Gilbert was far ahead and better mounted now and though Silvain rode hard when the dawn broke he was above the valley of the Parma and saw far below a single horseman coming to the Italian lines.

SILVAIN turned and made across the mountains to the Fornovo road. He spurred the weary horse till it could do no more, then flung himself from the saddle and trudged on.

The sun was high and the army had gone far on the way to Fornovo before he met the vanguard. Bayard's men challenged him, then recognized him under his dust and let him pass. Bayard rode by without a word or a look. But in the rear of Bayard's company was Thibaut leading the two spare horses. He gave forth a howl of greeting and Silvain flung himself on a horse and galloped on to seek the marshal.

In the middle of the long column of march the Marshal d'Esquerdes was riding beside the king. Silvain made his salute and turned and kept pace with them, but it was long before the marshal could notice him, for the king was in a martial humor that day, he had mounted his black charger, he had put on his gilded armor and his silver helmet with the black plumes and he had to tell the marshal how to conquer Italy.

But at last earnest looks and signs did their work. The marshal shook off His Majesty and broke away and rode out to Silvain. "What the —— ails you that you come hovering over us like a crow?"

"I bring you ill news, my lord," Silvain said in a low voice. "Your plan is betrayed. The Italians will be ready for you at Fornovo."

The marshal glared at him.

"——! you promised me the pass of Fornovo was clear."

"And so it was, my lord. But there are traitors stand by the king. After you made your plan last night, two knights of the Sieur de Vesc stole out from the camp, Gilbert du Marais and Philibert de la Vire. And when I knew it I hunted them over the mountains and Philibert is dead but Gilbert saved himself from me and came down to the Italians at Parma. He was in the king's tent. He knows all. He will bring them to meet you at Fornovo. Still there is time, my lord. Halt and turn aside and make for the Parma valley."

"Make for ——," the marshal growled. "You are too cunning, my man. You know too much. Wherever we go you find danger. The —— take you, if we are trapped at Fornovo you led us into the trap."

"I have warned you, my lord. Turn now and go by Parma."

"Oh rogue, can I turn the king's army as you turn your horse?"

"There is time yet——"

"——, I will hear no more of you. To the —— with your tales. If all Italy holds the pass against us we will break through."

"I pray you, my lord, give me men to lead," Silvain cried.

"You? Go to the rear. Ride with the baggage. That is the place for you and your fears. Go, I say, I will not trust you near the enemy. You are too busy, my man."

Silvain turned his horse and slowly made his way down the column. Among the mules and the packhorses laden with the king's pomp and the spoils of Italy Thibaut found him.

"God comfort you, my lord," he groaned. "What is this?"

"This is my wages, brother," Silvain said. "I have failed and I live."

The army was smitten with convulsions. The marshal and his knights and his squires raged up and down calling on the laboring guns to go forward, sending pikemen on, bringing horsemen back. It was the desire of the marshal that the army should advance in order of battle, no easy thing to contrive on a march down the broken ground of a mountain side into a funnel of a valley.

Thibaut sucked his teeth.

"My poor bones, we make haste," he said. "We are all tumbled and shattered before we have fought. What shall we be like after?"

"Pray God the Italians are hurried too," Silvain said. "That is our hope."

"Why if they run at us as we run at them we shall all be as merry as peas in soup."

Once down in the valley the marshal harried his army into some order and made a front that spread from side to side, though the boulders that strewed the ground and the torrent in the midst broke the line. Some way ahead they saw banners and the gleam of steel. The Italians had a long march to make from their old position and they were not rushing to the fight. Francesco of Mantua knew his men and his trade.

He had chosen his ground well. Where the valley opened out and forked his ranks were drawn up barring the easier road, ready to charge the French in flank if they turned to the other. He had already enough men to make a stand and more were coming up the valley but all his force was not yet in sight.

"By my faith, we may do it yet!" Silvain cried as he scanned their numbers. "Here is only a morsel of an army. Forward! Forward!"

But the marshal sounded a halt. Having room for a wider front he must make a new order of battle and fight by the rule. He spread his army out and brought up his fourteen guns and set them in the middle of the line and the weary gunners began a slow and solemn cannonade.

The Italians had no guns to answer it,

but they held their ground and the fire did them little harm for it was not in the art of gunnery to foresee what any gun would do and most of the balls hit the ground before they hit the enemy and others went wide and others high. But the din was great and the smoke.

"Pity me, this is dread," quoth Thibaut sneezing. "Yet a merciful way to fight. I have seen an oak staff shed more blood."

"You will see blood enough, brother," Silvain said.

The marshal having shattered his enemy's line by gun fire according to the rules of art, sent his best horsemen to charge and break through. They charged well, but they found a stubborn fence of pikes and were checked and thrown back and Italian horsemen fell upon their flank and scattered them.

So the fight went with charge and countercharge; for the guns had fired off all their powder and shot in vain, and the French horsemen rode furiously but could not break the steady Italian line and the ground was strewn with their dead.

Francesco of Mantua was content to beat them back. He ventured no advance. He kept his men in hand. He would not move his main strength from the ground he had chosen.

* * *

"THIS day is a long day, friend," Thibaut said.

Silvain was out of the saddle pacing to and fro wearily, turning with a toss of the head to look at the fight, tramping on again bent over the ground. Thibaut saw his face white and his sunken fierce eyes. About them with the baggage were more than the muleteers, lacqueys and men who had slunk out of the fight and there was a din of gloomy chatter.

Suddenly Silvain checked.

"They have a captain there, brother," he said loudly. "He will hold us here till we have worn out our strength. And then we are meat for his supper. Here we stay waiting till he is ready to eat us and there is the road to France." He pointed to the other fork of the valley across the Italian front.

After a first grimace of horror Messire Thibaut took his cue. "By my bones, it is time to go," he grinned. "We should be off with the baggage and leave the noble knights to fight it out behind us."

That noble counsel went to the heart of the cowards and camp followers with the baggage. They began to slink off. Some of them started the pack horses. In a little while all the baggage train was in motion making off behind the army to the open valley on the flank.

Then Silvain flung himself on his horse and galloped to the fight.

"God deliver him, he is mad," Thibaut gasped, but he mounted and followed after.

The Italians saw the long line of laden beasts laboring away, saw the plunder of their land being borne off and roared out rage and threats. The Marshal d'Esquerdes saw his men leaking away in retreat and cursed and sent a troop to head them off.

Silvain rode to the front line and found Bayard's company, worn by many a charge, drawn up under the silent guns. "Forward, brother, forward for God's honor," he cried. "Look, they waver, they will not stand."

Bayard stood in dinted and bloody armor beside a weary horse. He wiped the sweat from his eyes.

"You come late to the battle, Sir Silvain," he said. "I have no place for you."

"This is your hour, Bayard, God gives you glory," Silvain rode out to the front and he shouted. "In the king's name, charge! France! France!" and he drew his sword and galloped on. "Forward for France!"

"Great God, is he to shame us?" Bayard muttered. "By St. Denis, he is in the right! Sound trumpets! Advance banner! Charge!"

For the thing was going as Silvain foretold. The Italian line shook and shifted. To watch all the French train of plunder escaping them was too hard a trial for the old hired soldiers of fortune who made half Francesco's army, and the other half, young levies, saw a retreat begun and thought the French were beaten and the time come for pursuit. Here and there men broke from the ranks and surged forward.

So upon a shaking, ragged line Bayard's company charged and clove deep and fought their way through and when the golden lilies tossed in the gap they had made came the rest of the French horsemen by troops and squadrons till the army of Francesco was shattered and swept away, a rabble of fugitives.

The little king, more splendid than ever with his gilded armor flashing on men squalid with the dirt of battle, with his black charger prancing and curvetting among weary horses and wearier men, came riding beside the Marshal d'Esquerdes to take the cheers of his army. But it was Bayard the marshal sought and Bayard was halted under the hillside, rallying a company many of whom were down, whose horses could hardly move for wounds and fierce riding.

"Here is the king to thank you, Bayard!" the marshal cried.

"You have ridden well, sir," the little king said graciously. "I have always had honor for Pierre de Bayard. You have proved worthy. I give you my hand." And so he did while Bayard bowed low.

"Sir, he is the best knight that ever fought for France," the marshal cried. "Name of God, Bayard, that was a grand stroke. You have the eye of a great captain. You took your moment, by ——! That was the finest charge that ever a man rode."

"Oh, sir, this praise is not mine," Bayard said. "It was not I who led the onset but Silvain de St. Lo. I pray you do him honor, for he has won this battle."

The marshal frowned, the marshal stared.

The king tossed his big head and cried out:

"Who leads this army then? It seems I do not know. I thought it was the king of France."

"Silvain de St. Lo?" the marshal growled. "Are you mad? That is the knave who brought us into this Italian trap. Why man, he is false as ——. It was he who set the baggage train in flight, telling the fools to save themselves for all was lost. Body of God, if we are not betrayed, no fault of his for he has worked hard enough."

"I do not know that, my lord. But this I know, he rode to me and bade me charge and charged himself before us all."

"Why man, because he meant to betray you too. He thought the army was worn out and you would fail and break and give the Italians a chance to come down on us and make an end. Charge first? I warrant he did. He was in haste to get over to them before I caught him." The marshal laughed. "The —— give them joy of him? I think they will not be quick to pay him for this day's work. The knave had not told them how Frenchmen fight."

Bayard hung his head.

"I am sorry," he said. "I am sorry. He was a true knight once."

Away behind him by the stream a man who sat beside a dead horse muttered "You too, brother?" and scrambled to his feet and trudged off up the hillside and after him another followed wearily.

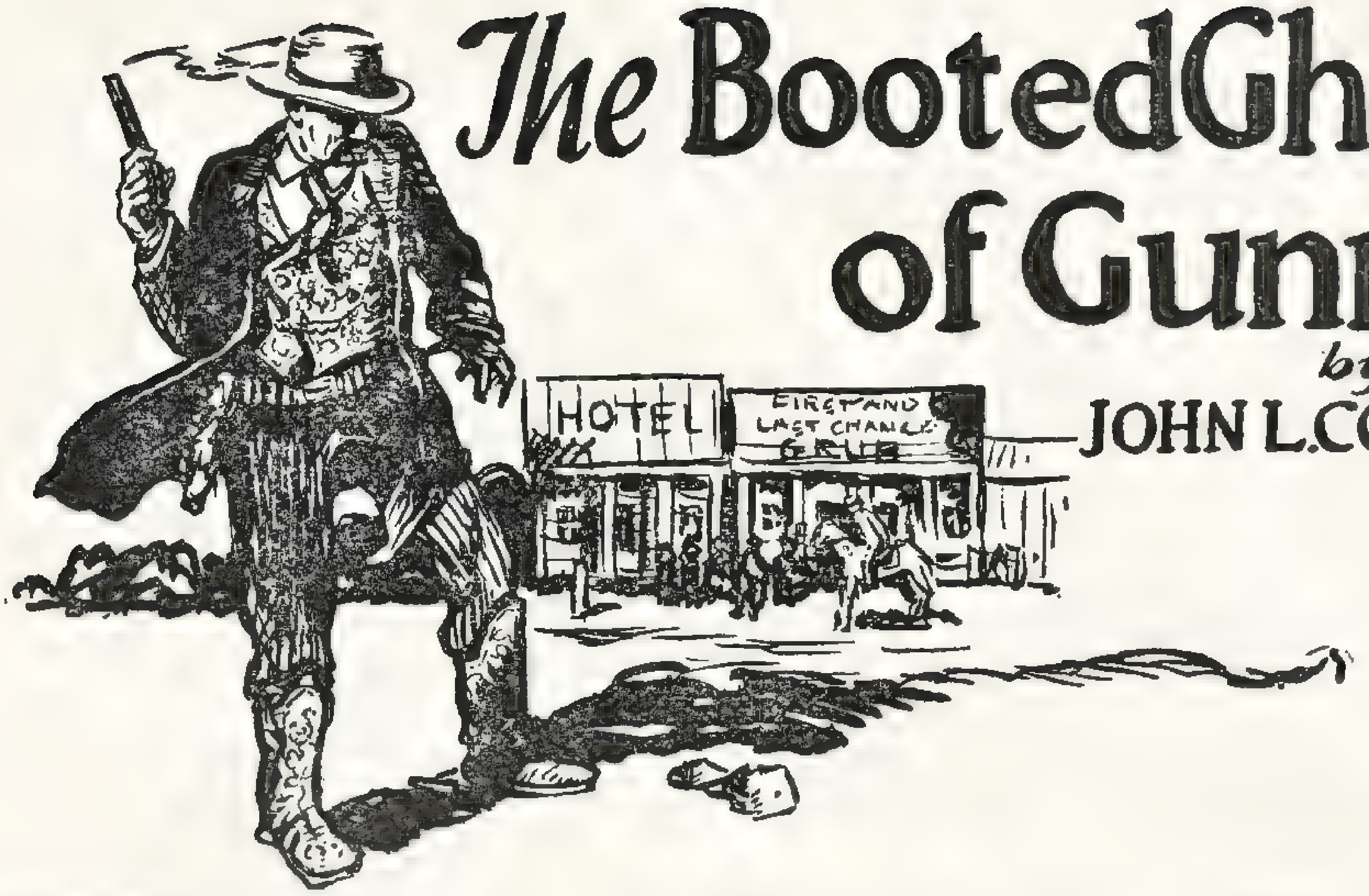
"Where now, lord?" Thibaut groaned.

But Silvain was murmuring to himself—

"An offering of a free heart will I give thee and praise thy name O Lord," and he laughed. "I have ridden under the lilies this day."

"What is for us now?" Thibaut groaned. "The more we do the worse we fare. Naked we end as we began. And no man is our friend."

"We go to win honor, brother," Silvain said and strode on in the gathering dark.


HOTEL
FIRST AND LAST CHANCE GRUB

The Booted Ghosts of Gunmen

by JOHN L. CONSIDINE

THAT every mortal, no matter what his station, has his poetic moments, higher aspirations, cravings for better things, is attested by many writers, but by none more succinctly than Gilbert in the lines:

When the enterprising burglar's not a-burgling,
  When the cut-throat isn't occupied in crime,
He loves to hear the little brook a-gurgling,
  And listen to the merry village chime.
When the coster's finished jumping on his mother,
  He loves to lie a-basking in the sun.
Take one consideration with another,
  A policeman's lot is not a happy one.

The bad man of the old border had two great aspirations: to become a "Chief" and to die with his boots off. To those who live in law-abiding communities the latter of these ambitions may seem easy of achievement, but in the Far West of pioneer days the two aims were always to be found in violent conflict. For a man to become Chief, other men simply had to die with their boots on, and the acquisition of the title almost invariably made it certain that its proud possessor should, departing, leave behind him, not footprints on the sands of time, but boot-tracks on the dusty desert's face.

Despots of a day, they had their kingly slogans. "I am the State," declared Louis XIV. "I am Chief," came from the depths of a heart not less swollen with pride. "After me the deluge," predicted the dying Louis XV. "Take off my boots," were the last words of the Chief—if he had time to say them.

No oriental potentate resented more quickly or fatally a design of usurpation than did the Chief an attempt on his title. Henry Plummer, historic badman of Montana's early days, put up with a great deal from his refractory pal, Jack Cleveland, but when Jack announced that he was Chief he signed his own death warrant.

The gunman as Chief seems to have originated in pioneer Nevada. The first settlement in what is now that State was made by followers of Brigham Young not long after the founding of Salt Lake. It was at Genoa, situated about fourteen miles from Carson City, the present capital of the State. To all who crossed the plains on their way to the California goldfields Genoa was known as Mormon Station, which name stuck to it for several years.

The first building of a permanent nature erected in Genoa was put up by Col. ~~John~~ Reese, who came from Salt Lake in 1851 with a stock of dry-goods. It was a large log-house, forty-five square yards in area, built in the form of an L and formed two sides of a pentagonal fort. Reese bought the land on which the town of Genoa now stands, with a farm adjoining, of Captain Jim, chief of the Washoe Indians, for two sacks of flour. Two years later the Mormons founded the hamlet of Franktown, not many miles away, and six years later Major Ormsby bought a tract of land about fourteen miles from Genoa and laid out a town which he called Carson, in honor of the famous Kit, and which later became the capital of the State. Not very far from

Carson was a trading station known as Ragtown, from the fact that there the womenfolk of the Plains-crossers discarded the clothes they had worn on the journey before bedecking themselves anew for their appearance in California, although they still had the great barrier of the Sierra to surmount before entering the promised land.

About the time of the settlement of Genoa, Mormon immigrants found gold not far from the Carson River and named the place Gold Cañon. As it was too late in the season for safe passage over the Sierra into California, they worked the diggings. But the gold being of a dust-like fineness and the quantity not up to their expectations, nearly all of them left for California in the spring, expecting to get rich picking up nuggets.

Other miners from California, where new diggings had become rare, crossed the Sierra and took up the work abandoned by the Mormons. Pushing up the cañon, where they found the ground richest, they founded a camp called Johntown. The original discovery, abandoned to the despised Oriental, became known as Chinatown. But the principal settlement in all that vast region of more that 112,000 square miles was Johntown, which at the height of its prosperity numbered almost two hundred souls. The nearest town to the east was Salt Lake, about six hundred miles away. To the west was Sacramento, one hundred and fifty miles, but the great ramparts of the Sierra uplifted themselves between. Then came the discovery of the Comstock, four or five miles above Johntown, and with the announcement of that rich find adventurers from the four corners of the earth flocked in. Among them were practically all the "bad men" from Salt Lake to the Pacific ocean and from the Canadian to the Mexican border.

FOR all-around deviltry, Sam Brown more nearly approximates the level of the Montana gunmen than any other of the Nevada contingent. He was preëminently the worst of all the bad men who flocked to that territory with the discovery of the Comstock lode. He used to brag that he had killed sixteen men, but dispassionate historians declare that he padded his record.

Unlike most of the Chiefs, Brown seldom drew a gun. He was a knife specialist. His home state was Texas, but history is silent as to any bowie exploits of his before his Californian debut, which took place in Mariposa, where one night he killed a patron of his gambling-house. Mariposa was in the throes of a law-and-order spasm at the time, as a result of which Brown was obliged to betake himself to Calaveritas. There one night two Mexicans, playing at his monte game, incurred his disesteem by persisting in crimping the cards. He slashed them wide open and left them dead on the floor. A mob of Mexicans beset him, but, armed with knives though they were, their ferocity was inferior to his, for he carved one of them to death before he escaped and gave himself into the hands of the sheriff. In that day and place it was almost as safe to kill a Mexican as it was a Chinaman, and for the second time Sam Brown went scot free.

Six years passed, and although the full toll of death exacted by that lethal bowie is not known, it must have claimed another victim, for Brown fled the pleasant clime of California for the rough frontier village of Genoa, on the eastern slope of the Sierras, where he opened another monte game.

It was a year memorable in the annals of the Far West, for one sunny afternoon in June two prospectors, from washing out a poor dirt that was netting them less than two dollars a day, unwittingly uncovered the croppings of the Comstock, from which a third of a billion in gold and silver bullion was afterward taken.

Genoa, but thirty miles away, emptied itself into the Comstock. The first winter was frightful, particularly so to those who toiled not. It must have been during that time that Sam Brown descended so close to the level of honest toil as to take a job as station-keeper on the line of the Overland stage.

But with the spring living conditions bettered and the immense riches of the mines drew, magnet-like, the male vultures and female harpies who infested all the mining camps of the Pacific Coast. News of the harvest came to Sam Brown at his lonely station and he struck out for Virginia City. The last stage-stop on the way was at Carson City, but fourteen miles off. The evil fate of Billy Bowe decreed that Sam Brown should elect to remain there overnight. There was a hilarious throng at the

City Hotel that night, and Bowe, a jovial old prospector, was jestingly telling his companions Munchausen yarns of his fighting feats, when Brown, who was not of their party, stepped up and said:

"You're a gassy coward. Take this."

And plunging his bowie into the old man's belly, he turned it round and round. Billy Bowe slumped to the sawdust, a corpse. The crowd stood aghast, but no one stirred. The wanton ferocity of the deed seemed to paralyze them.

Thus stood Sam Brown at the threshold of his entry to that larger stage at Virginia City. Perhaps he had heard of an anarchy prevailing there—of the presence of a job-lot of lesser killers, who, itching to become Chief, had not yet begun to whet their knives on each other's throats. Here was Sam Brown's trumpet-blast proclaiming, "My credentials date from the City Hotel." If this was his intention, his tactics proved effective, as a chronicle of "Dan de Quille," Mark Twain's fellow reporter, would indicate.

"Early in the spring of 1860," wrote Dan, "Sam Brown, known all over the Pacific Coast as 'Fighting Sam Brown,' arrived on the Comstock. He was a big Chief, and when he walked into a saloon, a side at a time, with his big Spanish spurs clanking along the floor, and his six-shooter flapping under his coat-tails, the little Chiefs hunted their holes and talked small on back seats."

But Sam Brown was not one to bask for long in the warmth of a mere hearsay reputation. He was playing at faro one night in Newman's resort, in poor luck and cursing the cards and everybody and everything, when Johnny McKenzie, the dealer, a quiet and inoffensive young man, finally lost patience and said:

"Mr. Brown, if this game doesn't suit you, you are not obliged to play against it."

"Well, I don't like the —— game, and I guess I won't play any more," replied Brown.

He arose from his seat and sauntered carelessly around to a position behind the dealer. Suddenly, without a word of warning, he grasped McKenzie by the chin and drawing back his head, coolly drew the bowie across his windpipe, sawing away until the man was all but beheaded. McKenzie's lifeless body sagged to the floor, while Brown wiped his bowie on his trousers-leg, walked to a billard-table, wrapped himself in the green cloth cover, lay down, and fell asleep—or pretended to.

Brown would even brag of his own diabolism. He was in the battle of Pyramid Lake, first of the Pah Ute war. From that awful slaughter, when of a force of one hundred and five whites but twenty-nine escaped with their lives, his good or evil genius saved him—but by an act as cruel as his most brutal murder. During the mad flight from the ambush he was thrown, and his horse continued on without him. He instantly pulled a young man named Robert Snowden, scion of a prominent Californian family, from his saddle and, mounting in his place, left him to his doom. Had not Brown basely boasted of this inhuman act it probably would never have become known.

Many of the frontier man-slayers of that period were dandies who prided themselves on their looks, but not Sam Brown. His build and gait were calculated to deceive the prospective victim. He was a human brute of the reptilian order. Big, slouchy, and slow of movement, except when he made the fatal spring, he impressed one as a huge saurian, lying in wait for his prey. He was roughly dressed, his reddish-brown hair was untrimmed, and he wore his long, sandy whiskers gathered up and tied under his chin. Everybody knew who he was, but kept aloof and eyed him askance. He was conscious of the fear and loathing he inspired, and enjoyed it, fancying himself a hero. That's all there was at bottom to Sam Brown—a coarse, vain, conceited murderer.

Residents of orderly communities will naturally wonder how such a wretch escaped the toils of the law, or, failing that, why a "vigilance committee" was not organized for his exclusive benefit. But the municipal government was badly disorganized. It had been but recently that the question as to whether the authorities of Utah or the local officials should rule the Territory had been settled. And many of the officials, from the federal judges down to the local police, were notoriously corrupt. As for the matter of a vigilance committee, the reputable citizens of the Comstock were too busy at that moment seeking their fortunes, to care to give their time to such comparatively unimportant matters as the regulation of society; and the disreputable ones were perfectly content to let matters stand as they were.

Unlike the Montana desperadoes, the Nevada roughs were not formally organized, but when one of them got into trouble, the others were always ready to go to his assistance. They provided money to hire good attorneys for his defense, to bribe jurors, and suborn perjured witnesses. If by any chance he happened to be convicted—which was rarely the case—they bent their efforts toward helping him to break jail, and provided means for him to escape from the Territory. And they were always prepared to go on the stand and perjure themselves in his behalf.

NOT long after his return from the Indian campaign, Brown learned that a brother murderer was about to go to trial at Genoa. Brown had never met the man, but that made no difference. He said he would go and clear him with his testimony. The next morning he rode into Genoa on his big white horse. The stable-hands took good care of the animal. The care of it was none the less sedulous for being gratuitous. They knew better than to ask pay of Sam Brown.

From the stable he stalked proudly to the court house. His presence created a sensation. Judge and jurors were visibly uneasy. Spectators jumped out of the second-story windows or got down behind the benches, fearing he might shoot up the place for the mere fun of it. But William M. Stewart (afterward United States Senator) who was assisting the district attorney, produced a revolver and bade him put up his hands, Brown obeyed, Stewart ordered him to the witness-box, and he was sworn.

"Now, Mr. Brown," said Stewart, "you have bragged that you would come here, swear this defendant free, and make the court like it. I am here to tell you that if you make a gun-play or give false testimony I will blow your brains out."

Brown knew Stewart as a leader of the Comstock bar and a man of his word. He was willing to take his statement at its face value.

Revolver in hand, Stewart went ahead and made Brown admit that he knew nothing of the case and that the defendant had a bad reputation. The defendant's lawyer protested that Stewart was browbeating his witness, but Stewart maintained that he was merely preventing him from intimidating others.

"Do you feel, Mr. Brown," inquired Stewart, "that you are being intimidated?"

That was about the last thing Brown would have cared to admit. He had had enough of that line of examination anyhow, and he provided a diversion by remarking that he was under indictment in Plumas County, California, for assault with a deadly weapon.

"I need a lawyer like you," he told Stewart. "Your style just about hits me right. Would you accept a five-hundred-dollar retainer?"

"Certainly," answered Stewart.

The court then adjourned, at the request of Brown, and he treated the crowd at the nearest bar.

But notwithstanding this expression of amity and good-will, Brown probably did not feel any too good over the way things had turned out. He got his big white horse and started out of town. About three miles from Genoa he drew rein in front of the road-house of Henry Van Sickle, who was sitting on the front porch.

"Hello, Van!" was Brown's greeting. "How are you?"

"Tip-top," was the placid reply. "How are you, Brown?"

Van Sickle was a logical, matter-of-fact Dutch rancher who, although he knew much of Sam Brown, considered that as long as he had no business with Brown, Brown could have no business with him. He was mistaken.

"Tip-top, eh?" drawled Brown. "Guess you're feeling too —— well."

And laughing merrily, Brown turned loose on Van Sickle with his six-shooter. At the second shot the astounded Dutchman, concluding that there had been about enough of that sort of foolishness, made the door in two jumps and bolted into the house. Brown slid from his saddle and followed. Van Sickle ran through the front hallway into the dining-room, and then through the kitchen into the back yard. Brown pursued him as far as the dining-room door, where he halted, scanned the faces of the surprized diners, and then, with pistol still cocked and leveled, backed out again. He remounted his horse and resumed his ride up the valley.

In a little while he overtook another horseman, named Henderson. Henderson was not suffering for the lack of company, but he did not say so to Brown. Nor did the world seem any brighter to Henderson for Brown's recital of how he had terrified Van Sickle.

Van Sickle had been badly frightened at first, but by now he was fighting mad. Arming himself with a double-barreled shotgun, loaded with buckshot, and saddling a horse, he rode rapidly to a spot which he knew Brown would have to pass. At a turn of the road, he confronted the two. Warning Henderson to get out of the way, he let drive with both barrels at Brown, who fell from his horse, wounded, but not seriously; for the discharge had been at long range. Brown remounted and, returning ineffectively the fire with his pistol, put spurs to his horse, and was off. He fled to William Cosser's ranch, in which direction Van Sickle followed with his empty fowling-piece.

Friends had trailed Van Sickle and, knowing that he had but two charges, brought him a fresh supply. Reloading, Van Sickle watched the house. Brown finally emerged, got to his horse, and made another attempt at flight. Van Sickle's horse proved a little the fleeter, and the rancher, overtaking his man, again let drive with both barrels, but this time without effect. Brown's three bullets also missed their mark. By this time, realizing that he was up against a human bulldog, determined to kill him, Brown was in mortal terror.

He finally got to the home of a Mrs. Mott and dismounting begged a refuge. Van Sickle, reloading his gun, awaited his coming out. But Brown had no use for a man who gave him no chance to come within stabbing distance and waited until the gathering darkness enabled him to steal out unperceived and get his horse. Sensing such a maneuver, Van Sickle sent a passer-by to ask Mrs. Mott if her visitor were still there, only to learn that the bird had flown.

Up the road a distance was the road-house and barn of Luther Olds, at which horsemen bound to and from California were wont to put up. Van Sickle, familiar with all the region, knew of a short cut to the place and followed it. At Olds' place he learned that Brown had not arrived. Feeling certain that his man would come that way, Van Sickle dismounted and took up his watch inside the barn, from the lintel of the door of which hung a lighted lantern.

In about a half an hour he heard the jingle of spurs as a horseman neared the place and stepped out from his place of concealment in a box-stall as Brown drew rein under the lantern. As Van Sickle covered him with the shotgun, Brown uttered a scream of terror and begged for his life.

"I've got you this time, Sam," was Van Sickle's reply. Riddled with buckshot Sam Brown slumped from his saddle to the threshold of Lute Olds' barn beneath the swinging lantern which had beckoned him to his final reckoning this side of Avernus.

A Genoa coroner's jury rendered a verdict that Samuel Brown had come to his death "from a just dispensation of an all-wise Providence." Van Sickle offered to pay for his burial, and nobody disputed the privilege. The funeral cost him one hundred dollars, which was considered lavish in the case of Sam Brown. He did not put up a headstone, but no monument was necessary. The terror of Sam Brown's name was enough; and today any child in Genoa can point out the spot.

FOR a while after the passing of Sam Brown fresh aspirants to chieftaincy rose and fell, usually biting the dust in their descent. There was a sort of interregnum, which ended with the advent of Langford Peel, a pleasant-faced, blond-bearded young man, of a slightly rustic cast, which caused him to be generally known as "Farmer" Peel. In Salt Lake a few years before he had killed a man, and while the slaying might have been avoided, it appears to have been a clear case of self-defense. Nevertheless it lay heavy on the conscience of Farmer Peel. From that moment his course lay straight ahead to the usual end of the frontier gunman.

His wanderings led him from Salt Lake to San Bernardino, to Los Angeles, to San Francisco, and thence, four years after the killing of Rucker, to the Comstock. Shortly after his arrival he had a street fight with Dick Paddock—who died sixteen years later with his boots on—in which Paddock was dangerously wounded. John Dennis, better known as "El Dorado" Johnny, who pined to be Chief, was a friend of Paddock.

Walking along C Street the next day, Johnny met City Marshal Pat Lannon.

"Pat, what sort of a corpse do you think I'd make?"

"You don't look much like a corpse now, Johnny."

"Well, I'm bound to be a corpse or a gentleman in five minutes."

A few doors up the street, he turned into Robinson's bar. Peel was there, drinking a cocktail.

"Are there any Chiefs around this morning?" asked Johnny.

"You probably intend that remark for me," rejoined Peel.

"Any one can take it up that wants to."

"All right, we'll settle it right now. Come out in the street."

Here Johnny made the last and most important mistake in his life. He turned out and into the street. As he faced about he found himself looking into Peel's revolver-muzzle. One shot finished Johnny and his ambition to be Chief.

One thing that procured the slayers immunity was their disposition to keep their brawls "in the family." They discriminated even between the police, some of whom were tough cases themselves—as Mark Twain's "Roughing It" will testify. And Peel was a man of discrimination. Once, drunk and boisterous, and threatened with arrest, he declared that no man that ever wore a star could arrest him. City Marshal Lannon, hearing the uproar, rushed to the place and pushed his way into the throng. He was disagreeably surprized to find that his man was Peel, but, having gone that far he was not the man to back out. The arrest would have to be made.

"No man," reiterated Peel with a profane expletive, "that ever packed a star in this city can arrest me." Then his eye fell on Lannon, and he added, "I'll take that back. You can arrest me, Pat, for you're no fighting man; you're a gentleman." And giving up his pistol he went with Lannon.

But what followed gives an inkling of why judges were chary of dealing with such men. Peel said he hadn't that much with him, but if permitted to go he would get it and pay the fine. The judge agreed. Peel went out and took several drinks. In about half an hour he returned and walked up to Davenport.

"Judge," he said mildly, "I've come back to settle."

Highly pleased, Davenport stroked his long whiskers, of which he was very proud.

"Very good of you, Mr. Peel," he said.

But he changed his opinion when Peel, seizing him by those whiskers, pounded his head against the wall. Policemen were standing by, but none stepped in. They preferred to regard the little incident as a personal affair of the judge's. Having knocked His Honor dizzy, Peel walked out again. The fine was never collected.

Peel managed to outlast five hectic years on the Comstock, and left Nevada unbarked. In Helena, Montana, he had a quarrel with John Bull, the partner who had accompanied him from Nevada, and laid his hand on his pistol. Bull protested that he wasn't "heeled."

"Go, heel yourself," and Peel slapped him.

"Peel," warned Bull, "I'll come back, sure."

"When you come," advised Peel, "come a-fighting."

Bull went and made his will. Then he saw Peel, got the drop on him, and put three bullets into him before Peel could draw his pistol. Peel died with his boots on.

* * *

TOM PEASLEY, the original of Buck Fanshaw in "Roughing It," although contemporary with Farmer Peel on the Comstock, moved in a different class.

Few communities thrive in their youth like a prosperous mining camp, and in the four years to elapse between the June day when O'Riley and McLaughlin made their great strike and the beginning of the rise of Tom Peasley, the Comstock had grown to a town of nearly 20,000, with a city government, the finest fire department for a community of that size in the world, large fire-proof brick-and-stone buildings, and many rich mines, employing thousands of men. It had three dailies, on one of which the "Territorial Enterprise," Mark Twain was working as a reporter. The editors wrote what were known as slashing articles, and every now and then fought a duel in which one or the other was seriously wounded. Everybody was getting rich, or in process of getting rich, or had hopes of getting rich; money and whisky flowed like water; saloons and gambling houses were going night and day; happiness, hope, and excitement filled the air.

The town was six thousand feet above the level of the sea, the rarefied atmosphere was highly stimulating to the young and nervy men who thronged its streets, and when to the wine of that mountain air was added a more substantial stimulation, the spirit of adventure was likely to seize a man without warning. It was there that the phrase, "a man for breakfast," became a household word.

Tom Peasley hailed from New York, where he had been a friend of Tom Hyer, Bill Poole, and men of that ilk. He was a factor in Comstock politics and became successively door-keeper of the Territorial Assembly, sheriff of Storey County, and sergeant-at-arms of the State Senate. But these modest preferments convey no adequate idea of the esteem he enjoyed. In fact, he cut a more prominent figure in the life of the Comstock than men who afterwards went to the United States Senate. Lack of education was the barrier to his achieving high official position.

In New York he had "run with the masheen," and on the Comstock he became head of that splendidly equipped fire department; in all probability had everything to do with its becoming the best of its size in the world. He was the idol of the tough sports who guided its destinies, and his bar became their headquarters, and that of the politicians who sought their support.

During the early stages of the Civil War there were many anti-Unionists in Virginia City and several attempts were made to raise the flag of the Confederacy. It is said that a secret society, known as the Knights of the Golden Circle, plotted to weld Nevada to California in a plan to take them out of the Union and form a state to be known as the Republic of the Pacific. Their immediate aim was to secure the riches of the mines of both States for the treasury of the Confederacy, which was very hard up for specie. I have read more than once that the liquid assets of the Confederacy were but $25,000,000, and I have never seen the statement contradicted. And the output of the Comstock for one year alone during that time was estimated at $20,000,000.

Nevada was admitted to the Union the year before the end of the war for the express purpose, according to Charles A. Dana, of passing the Fourteenth Amendment. And President Lincoln on one occasion adverted to the importance of Nevada's contributions of gold and silver bullion in maintaining the credit of the nation when specie was next in importance to fighting men.

It was largely due to the muscular patriotism of Tom Peasley that Nevada Territory finally declared its allegiance to the Union so emphatically. His courage and determination forced a Comstock merchant who had hoisted the Confederate flag over his place of business, and who was backed by a number of ardent sympathizers, to haul it down again. When the abettors of rebellion snatched the banner from a Union recruiting officer and broke the drum borne by the small boy who marched before the flag, Peasley's fists broke up the mob. He knocked out two or three of them, and the rest ran away. Then, seizing the colors, he marched at the head of the procession through the streets.

During the presidential campaign of 1864 the anti-Unionists held a great rally in Virginia City. Fiery speeches and a street parade were features of the demonstration. As the parade neared the International Hotel, the center of all civic activities, Tom Peasley advanced to the middle of the street, faced the leaders of the line, which numbered thousands, and leveled two six-shooters at their heads. They came to an abrupt halt. Peasley pointed to a picture of President Lincoln that had been suspended from a window of the hotel, head-downward to indicate the derision of the anti-Unionists for the President.

"This parade stops right here until that picture is righted," announced Peasley.

The excitement was intense. The parade leaders drew their guns in readiness for a general shooting affray. Peasley repeated his demand that the picture be righted. Knowing the deadly earnestness of the man, and not caring to trifle with one of his reputation, the paraders sent word into the hotel to reverse the picture.

In dead silence, the change was made. The messenger sent to reverse it thought it less humiliating to the procession to take the picture away. He was about to withdraw it when Peasley ordered him to leave it out, right side up. He obeyed, and only then did Peasley step aside and give the word for the parade to move on.

His vitality was proportionate to his gigantic structure. He would break in the door of a friend's house rather than wait to turn the knob, or slap an acquaintance on the back, sending him to the floor. Had he reserved these exuberances for friends alone it would have been better, but when he was in high spirits he distributed such attentions impartially.

ONE of the lesser aspirants to chieftaincy who had not gone to ornament Farmer Peel's private graveyard was "Sugarfoot" Jack. Tradition hands down no other name. He was a tall, gangling, pasty-faced youth, affecting tough ways of talk and manner and solicitous of the society of desperadoes. A nerveless, inoffensive boy, a lamb in wolf's clothing, his only claim to the title of "badman" was his futile ambition to be considered one. He was but a pretender, and he went the way of most pretenders.

At a free-and-easy New Year's eve masquerade, Peasley's palm sent Sugarfoot to the floor. Stung to the quick by the public indignity, burning to resent it, but without the courage to do so on the spot, Jack left the place in a rage, threatening vengeance. Men like Peasley always have toadies, and one of them brought him word.

Peasley was not used to threats, but what fired him was probably that Sugarfoot had used the "fighting word"—the epithet unpardonable by men of the frontier. Peasley went at once in quest of him. Down the moonlit main street, white with December snow, he went until he found Sugarfoot crouching behind an old-fashioned wooden-awning support, a post sometimes sought by the gunman of that day as a point of vantage and defense, but where that poor wretch was really cringing, unarmed and panic-stricken. Peasley, ignorant of his plight, advanced upon him, firing as he came, and riddled him with bullets.

A jury might acquit Peasley, but not his own conscience. He was a changed man and manifested it by selling his bar and taking up the show business for a living. He was still impulsive enough to resent an insult with a blow, but he had come to abhor the use of a weapon. He wanted no more pistol-fights. And this change invited his death.

It was during his term as sergeant-at-arms of the State Senate that, standing one night at a bar in Carson, he overheard a remark which he chose to construe as an insult. Turning like a flash, he knocked down the supposed offender, a young man named Martin Barnhart. Bystanders satisfied Peasley that the offensive words had not been meant for him, and he apologized to Barnhart, offering any reparation in his power. But the glowering Barnhart, sore to the marrow, spurned the proffer and nursed the grudge.

Chance brought the two to spend a fortnight or so of the following summer at Glenbrook, on the shores of Lake Tahoe, and Barnhart there sought to renew the quarrel by sending Peasley a challenge to fight with pistols. Peasley declined, adding that he had already expressed his regret for what had happened at Carson and did not wish to be the means of further injury. But the soft answer failed to soothe Barnhart's wrath. Perhaps Barnhart's animosity was whetted by a desire to become Chief.

Winter came, and with it another session of the legislature. Peasley was no longer sergeant-at-arms, but he visited Carson to meet his friends of the year before. He spent the first evening in various resorts, playing billards with Ned Ingham. The billiard-tables in all the Carson resorts were conducted as an adjunct to the bar trade, and Peasley and his companion noticed that Barnhart, accompanied by two comrades, visited and drank in several places where they played.

The man who has slain another does not, as a rule, retire early. Possibly he dreads the specters that visit a sleepless pillow and would remain up until utter weariness promises instant slumber. Peasley was no exception. Two o'clock in the morning found him still lingering about the stove in the lobby of the Ormsby House, chatting with Ingham, an old newspaper editor named Lewis, and two or three others, and smoking a last cigar before going to his room. In came Barnhart, with his two comrades, and strode up to Peasley.

"Why didn't you fight me last summer at the Glenbrook Hotel?" he demanded.

"I don't know," said Peasley, slowly and hesitatingly. "Are you always on the fight?"

"Yes," snapped Barnhart, with a vile epithet, and drew his pistol.

"You don't mean to murder me, do you?" exclaimed Peasley.

Barnhart answered with a bullet, piercing his heart. Barnhart fired again. Then, as Peasley strove to rise, he seized him by the shoulder and brought the barrel of the revolver down upon his skull with such force as to break both skull and revolver.

"Don't let him murder me," pleaded Peasley. "What are you all doing?"

The barrel of Barnhart's revolver had clattered to the floor. It was the old man, Lewis, who wrenched the stock from his hand, saying:

"There! You have shot and beaten him enough."

The dazed and dying giant staggered to his feet. Revolver in hand, he stumbled forward gropingly, like one blind.

"Don't let him shoot me," cried Barnhart, running into the washroom and slamming the door behind him.

Peasley lurched his way to the door. Through its upper half of glass, he fired once. Wrenching it open, he aimed once more. But, trying to press the trigger, he reeled.

"My God! I'm shot, through and through!" he exclaimed, sinking to the floor.

"He is dead," said the watchers. But, opening his eyes, he signed to Ned Ingham, who drew close.

"Is Barnhart dead?" he whispered.

"Yes."

A grim smile stole over the graying face.

"That's good," he gasped. "Pull off my boots. And send for my brother, Andy."

And so passed Tom Peasley, best of the old Nevada gunmen.

THERE were bad men afterward at Pioche, Bodie, Tombstone, and Leadville. But twenty years went by, and with the discovery of Tonopah and Goldfield a new order of things prevailed. Crooks there were a-plenty—San Francisco alone contributed one hundred and fifty—high-graders, and other kinds of criminal. But man-killers were few and far between, and none who made a trade of it. Another picturesque feature of the wild and woolly West had gone to the discard. The day of the Chief had passed.

CAJUN CUSTOMS

by N. H.

THE Cajun of Southwestern Louisiana has his own particular customs, some of them handed down by his Nova Scotian ancestors, others of more modern invention.

Often, in naming his numerous children, he will stick to a single letter. Thus, in a family that has chosen the letter O, the boys may be: Odelon, Olivier, Octave, Ovide, Optah, Otis, Oto; the girls: Octavie, Odelia, Ophelia, Odile, Olive, Olita, Olympe, Omeah. This system, though pleasantly alliterative, must result sometimes in confusion.

As inevitable as his cup of black coffee, is the Cajun's use of brick dust. This, pounded small, is scattered inside, and especially upon that shelf-like portion of his home which, however small, he calls a gallery. In its way it is ornamental, the dull red of the dust standing out against the dark weathered gray of the unpainted planking behind.

In the better class families the French proprieties are observed, the young folk addressing their elders with the formal "you" rather than the familiar "thou." Religious duties are seldom neglected. Saturday night balls, which last through until daybreak, are ended by the dancers attending mass in a body. Children are instructed fully in the principles of their faith with, sometimes, curious results.

I know of one boy who, having failed continually in his Catechism class, was the despair of the kindly priest who taught him. In the end the good father resolved on a desperate measure.

"See, Toto," said he. "You have not passed, you will never pass. Yet you are a good boy and work hard. So I will give you your chance. One question now, an easy one, and you go through. On what day was the birth of our Lord?"

As he thought Toto's face was expressionless. He answered with marked uncertainty.

"Good Friday."

The priest was patient. It was necessary to be so.

"Come," he pleaded. "Consider my question. It is a great day, one that we celebrate always."

At this a change came over Toto. His face flushed, his eyes glowed. Triumphantly he came out with it:

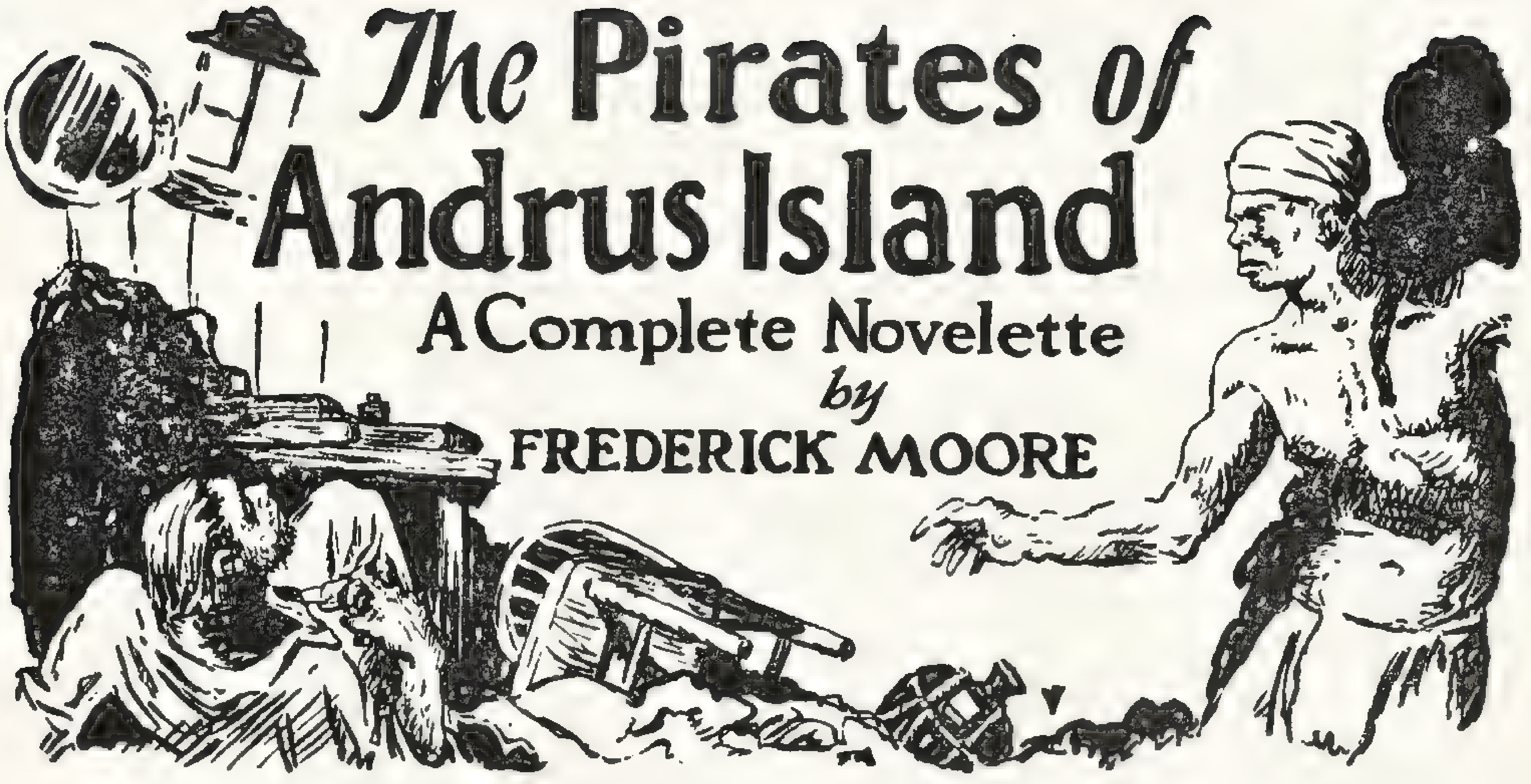
"Ah, *mon Père*, I know now. It is Mardi Gras."

The Pirates of Andrus Island

A Complete Novelette

by

FREDERICK MOORE



Author of "The Gunman at Goorabaya," "God of the Sakai," etc.

HELLO! What's *that?*"

Wade gave a startled exclamation and threw up his head with an animal-like alertness—that quickness which is characteristic of the hunted animal which hears in the distance the baying of hounds when they have picked up the lost scent.

The sound that had reached his ears up through the jungle-grown glade of Andrus Island was the last sound he had expected to hear that morning. He could scarcely believe he had heard it at all, though the faint echo of it was faintly falling from the hills. It was only a few minutes before that he had scanned most of the blue water of the reef-enclosed bay. There was no vessel in sight except a few native fishing-proas.

The next instant he knew that he had heard correctly; and he knew what it was. For again the double notes of a musical tinkle, soft and sweet, came plain enough over the low drone of the sea against the inner reefs.

"A schooner's bell!" he whispered.

He turned his head in another direction the better to catch the sound, and waited for it to come again.

There was a lazy interval, and again the double notes. The same interval of time, and *blam-blam!* This was the fourth time. The vibrations died away in the jungled slopes of the island, to return as an echo as delicate as the chimes from a fairy village.

"Eight bells!" he said, still whispering to himself, his head still askew, thrown up and immobile. His gray eyes were fixed upon the black mass of lava-rock which marked the open end of the little valley that ran down toward the beach.

"That schooner must have been down in the toe of the bay, and I missed her," he reflected. "Nice mess I'd been in if I'd gone along the beach without knowing anything had come in!"

That last thought seemed to worry him, for a trace of sudden fear had come into his eyes.

He looked about him at the thick brush in uncontrolled panic, as if he expected to see enemies peering out at him from the heavy leaves.

"She's not a trading-schooner!" he declared with conviction. "That bell's on a coast-guard cutter, I'll bet!"

His bearded face twitched nervously as he considered that the bell had been struck with something akin to daintiness, as if the sailor who had marked off the morning's time was properly awed by the peace and beauty of the little bay of Andrus.

His eyes narrowed and his jaw took on an agressive thrust. The fear that lingered in his eyes took on the aspect of dread. He had no particular dislike for traders, but this stranger might mean anything, while a trader merely had to be avoided.

He knew well enough that the bells of traders clanged with rude and heavy notes that sent low vibrations up through the palm groves and into the jungles. They were as raucous toned as the men who

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"The Pirates of Andrus Island," copyright, 1924, by Frederick Moore.

bossed them—heavy, dull, truculent and exuding trouble. They always clanged a warning that they cared nothing for the green and lazy beauty of Andrus Island or its natives. The bells bespoke perfectly the characters of their owners—heavy hands and merciless hearts that reeked of greed and made their own laws as they went along.

But this bell was different; it told of something behind it that should be feared greatly or feared not at all. He knew the characters of ships' bells well enough, for he had been on Andrus seventeen months.

In that time he had acquired all the cunning caution of a jungle beast. And he had abandoned the garments of civilization and had taken every precaution against being recognized from a distance as a white man. The clothes he wore when he first arrived were hidden in a rocky crypt, and he kept them sunned to avoid mold and the ravages of insects. He wanted to be ready to get away from Andrus when the opportunity offered. But it was a waiting game that Wade and Doxey, the other man hiding on the island with him, played.

Wade's face was covered with a short brown bristle of beard that grew nearly to his eyes. It served well as a mask. And his skin was burned to that peculiar rusty blackness which the white man acquires when exposed to tropical light over long periods.

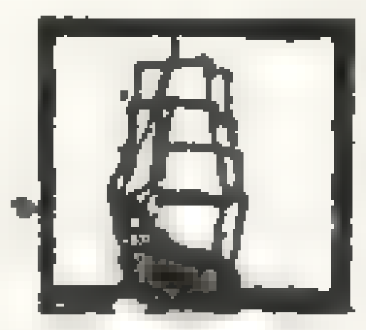
He wore only a breech-cloth—a length of faded red trade-cotton—tied native style about his loins. His head was wrapped in greenish cloth, turbanwise, for that color merged well into the background of island greenery. If seen at all by a white man, either through a telescope from the deck of a vessel or in a fleeting glimpse along the beach, it would be mistaken for the headgear of a native. His feet were protected by strips of old leather tied on like sandals with narrow lengths of old canvas. So Wade looked as wild as his environments, and his dark skin fitted him into his surroundings so perfectly that he was safe from the few white men who came to Andrus at rare and irregular intervals.

Wade dropped the half-dozen drinking-coconuts which he had gathered and moved down the glade toward the big rock. The fullness of his muscles over his lean and tall frame revealed his youth. Though his bearded face and the sun-wrinkles about his eyes made him look older, he was not more than twenty-five. He had the look of a man who has suffered hardships, yet there was nothing about his expression that indicated discontent with his condition of life. It was the sound of the queer ship's bell that had set him worrying.

He climbed the slight rise which closed the end of the glade from seaward. Taking care to get into the heavily leafed bush before looking out over the bay, he moved off to the left so that he could see in the direction of the native settlement. It was this part of the bay which he had neglected to study only a few minutes before.

He crouched low and pressed the pendent leaves slightly aside to peer out.

"There she is!" he breathed, and shaded his eyes against the sun's glare while he studied her rig carefully.



A WHITE schooner with three masts was resting on the placid water, just at the line of green which marked the shoaling of the bay. She was anchored some five hundred yards off the beach with the native houses which straggled through the palm groves on her beam. The buildings lay off to his right, and the curve of the bay increased their distance from him to a half a mile by land, and half of that along the line of his sight.

"Ah-ha!" he remarked with a cunning light in his eyes and a sudden quivering of his hand which held aside the big leaf. "I know what *she* is! That's "Salvation" Jessup in his *Gospel Argonaut!* That means Parson Jessup and his wife have come to sing a few hymns and convert the natives! Sure! Here's luck!"

All signs of worry vanished from his face. Now he grinned broadly, and a thoughtful look entered his eyes; a crafty look that took on something like hunger for the things which the schooner represented. All at once, by the magic of the trim little schooner, he was yearning for the comforts of civilization which he pretended to ignore.

He saw a figure move along under the awning of the quarterdeck. It was a woman in a white skirt and waist, and on her head a blue sunbonnet. She was walking back and forth, and he watched her for a few minutes. Suddenly she planted her elbows on the roof of the cabin, and holding her hands to her face, turned slowly round in a semicircle. He knew she was raking the shore with a pair of binoculars.

A half-dozen native outrigger canoes were hovering in a circle about the schooner. The men and women were holding up fruit to show to the native crew of the schooner, offering to trade. Other boats idled lazily at a distance, watching the strange schooner with curiosity and waiting until somebody from the schooner would want to be taken ashore.

"She hasn't been in long, I'd say," remarked Wade.

He noted a boat at the stern, secured by a long painter. The dingey hung in the falls at the stern, but this boat adrift was bigger—a whale-boat. It was covered with yellowed canvas that was probably a tarpaulin, though it might have been oiled cotton cloth. It stuck up in the center of the boat as if it covered a pyramid of stores piled amidships. It probably represented goods of some kind to be taken ashore and traded. Wade could see the boat-falls of the waist, hanging empty over the side. He reasoned that the whale-boat had been lowered since the schooner had come to anchor.

His expression suddenly changed to pondering seriousness. A new thought had come to him, a thought which spurred him to action. He let the leaves fall back into place, turned suddenly in his tracks and broke his way back to the open ground. When he reached the narrow trail of the glade he broke into a swift run without stopping to pick up the drinking-coconuts. He loped along through the heavily bowered little valley, making all the speed he could.

Rising gradually with the cañon which sliced back into the hills, he finally emerged into a sun-bathed little clearing, which was partly natural by reason of the ground and partly the result of a careful cutting away of vines and the low bushes of the thin, volcanic soil.

It had once been a native clearing, without doubt, for there were stumps of trees along its edges and mounds of basaltic rock overgrown with creepers. These mounds revealed the fact to any one who understood native customs that huts had once stood on them.

At first sight the place lacked anything suitable for human habitation. But against the side of a cliff of basalt, densely covered with vines and bush, there was a crude hut of thatch in among creepers that had been drawn from the cliff and trained down over the dried *nipa* of the roof. By this method the hut was fairly well concealed to anybody who might look across the clearing without being too inquiring.

Wade ran straight to this cluster of vines, which partly hid the house, and, bending so as to pass under the low-hanging eaves of thatch which formed a sort of veranda in combination with a narrow platform made of flattened bamboo, called out sharply but in a subdued voice—

"Doxey! Come out! There's something up, and we've got to get busy!"

II

WADE did not press in through the door of the shack, but leaned against one of the upright bamboo poles which held the roof in place. His face was streaming with perspiration after his run. He rolled a cigaret from a square of pandanus leaf and some native tobacco which he took from a tiny shelf on the upright and nervously struck a match with shaking fingers.

There came a grumbling reply from the inner darkness of the shack. It was the response of a man who had been roused from heavy sleep, and was not in particular good humor about it.

In a minute he appeared in the narrow doorway. A man of heavier build than Wade, but not so tall, was Doxey. He wore the same type of breech-cloth, but nothing on his head. His feet were bare. His skin was burned to a blackish tan. His hair was black and over-long. It hung down over his forehead in a damp mass, and he shook his head and brushed the locks away from his eyes. His thick calves were mottled with white spots, the healed sores of ulcers caused by leeches fastening to his skin in the moist jungles.

"Bring the coconuts?" he asked sleepily. "I'm strong for a drink; can't go that sulfur water of the spring."

He yawned and looked at Wade, and then glanced about the little veranda in search of the desired nuts. He held in his hand a pocket-knife which had in place of a blade a grooved spike, suitable for punching out coconut eyes and drawing off the liquid.

Wade moved to Doxey and grasped a bare and browned arm with a gesture that was peculiarly ferocious. He was still panting a little from his run, and he seemed to quiver all over with suppressed excitement.

"We can get away from Andrus Island—tomorrow—safe as a church!" he declared.

There was a glowing fierceness under the forced quietness of the words.

Doxey, startled, drew back from him a little, blinking his eyes out over the clearing. The movement was gentle and without any sign of resentment. But he seemed hurt and disappointed. It was with pitying eyes that he turned to Wade.

"Another touch of fever, eh? Told you to keep out of the sun." He noted the tenseness of Wade's grip.

Wade laughed lightly.

"Things fall our way at last, old man. We can chuck this place and get to some port so far away that we'll be safe."

He was coldly calm now, and showed that inner satisfaction which goes with a plan entirely settled.

"I don't intend to take the chance of a long cruise in any outrigger," objected Doxey. "If you've gone back to that idea, I tell you now just as I've told you a million times, I'm off it. I don't care to be picked up a raving maniac."

Wade waved a dismissing hand.

"This ain't outrigger stuff, man! This is what I've thought of many a time, but it was too good to hope for. And this is made to order—just cold luck, like a starving man picking up a boiled ham in the road!"

Doxey's interest was suddenly pricked into life. He stared at Wade now, convinced that something had happened which was decidedly worth while.

"Say, what the ——'s happened, anyway, to light you up like that? I thought you'd gone off your head!"

Wade good-naturedly thrust him against the attap wall of the hut and held his shoulders pinned there.

"Say, Dox, you've heard of Salvation Jessup?"

"Jessup! Why, yes! That's the parson who floats around in one of these Holy Joe schooners and converts the natives."

"Ever seen him? Or rather, has he ever seen you?"

"Don't know that I have—or he has. Why, what's Jessup got to do with this—and us?"

"Nothing much—yet. But it will have, before I've had another night's sleep, I'll bet! He's got a first-class little schooner—*Gospel Argonaut!*"

"Yes, I know her. Saw her lying in Tanjong Priok couple of years ago. White little party, may be some four hundred tons."

"Awful cute little schooner!" cried Wade enthusiastically. "Just the thing to take a nice little cruise in, of say a thousand miles. Nobody'd bother such a schooner—coast guards wouldn't want to board her, nobody'd think of watching her to see that she didn't carry what you might call—well, contraband passengers."

He grinned at his own facetious way of expressing his little joke.

Doxey snorted with disgust and pushed himself free of Wade's hands.

"You talk like a kid planning to go to a circus—that ain't in existence. Might know you were off your head again. Go on in and climb into the hammock and I'll cook you up something hot with ginger root in it. You're off your head."

Wade laughed openly at him.

"No, Dox, I'm not *loco.* I know what I'm talking about, but just wanted to fix it all up in my own mind before I crashed it on you. It's simple! So blasted simple that it came to me in a flash."

"Something's simple," growled Doxey. "Where are the coconuts you went for? I want a drink!"

"Listen, Dox! Salvation Jessup's in the bay with his *Gospel Argonaut!*"

Doxey turned on him, open mouthed and staring.

"Say!" he demanded. "Are you trying to string me? Or are you seeing things?"

"Not a string!" replied Wade seriously. "Blasted near missed seeing her until I heard her bell. Thought it must be a cutter at first, with that music-box bell. Couldn't think of anything but a cutter with a fool bell like that—fooled me! Sounds just like a clock back home striking in some old woman's parlor!"

He threw back his head and laughed up at the bit of blinding sky that was visible through the greenery.

"What's all this got to do with us?" demanded Doxey. "Except that we got to keep out of sight of this tract-giving, hymn-singing parson?"

"It has everything to do with us," retorted Wade sharply. "We've got to get aboard that schooner, Doxey!"

Doxey made a disgusted face.

"Honest, old man, you're as nutty as the coconut-grove!"

"Listen to me," insisted Wade. "Not so nutty as you'd think. Parson Jessup and his wife—she's aboard—will be glad to help us. I'll pile into a hammock and play sick. You go for the parson, tell him I'm dying—honest sailor stuff—shipwrecked and all that. Well, they can't let a sick man stay here if there's a chance of saving his life. Work on him, and he'll take us to some port where there's a doctor—anyhow, out of here."

"Sure!" said Doxey. "That'll be nice; some port where there are doctors and hospitals and police."

He was mildly ironical now, and finished off his words with a rasping little laugh of scorn at the absurdity of Wade's idea.

"What," asked Wade, imitating Doxey's mildness, "would you do if you had a nice little three-masted schooner, a missionary schooner, to take you anywhere you wanted to go?"

For more than a minute Doxey looked straight into Wade's eyes. Then the short man opened his mouth and drew in his breath sharply.

"Say!" he exclaimed. "I begin to get the drift!"

"Not a bad idea, eh? Considering the fact that you've got a first-class sheath-knife and I've got a navy revolver wrapped in oiled silk, with plenty of ammunition, this Salvation Jessup and his wife and his native crew, and maybe a white mate, ain't such an awful lot of folks to handle, eh? Simply a matter of getting aboard by hook or crook and out to sea. The rest would be easy."

He lazily lighted a fresh cigaret, his air that of a man who had solved a problem so perfectly that nothing remained to do but put the thing into motion.

"If we can get aboard her and stay long enough so the schooner'll be to sea, yes," admitted Doxey. "That's the trouble—getting aboard. But what if this Parson Jessup won't have us near his schooner, much less aboard her?"

"Mr. Parson Salvation Jessup'll have mighty little to say about it and what he does say he can say into the muzzle of my navy revolver. Twig that?"

"Ever meet this Salvation Jessup guy?" asked Doxey.

Wade shook his head.

"No. But he's the usual soft-headed missionary, I've heard. For that matter, so far's I'm concerned he can be hard as nails. I've bullets that'll be harder, I'll bet."

"What's this sick stuff you pulled a minute back?"

"Just an idea. I hear Jessup likes to help sailors who are down and out. Well, that's what we are so far as he's concerned. We'll get out our clothes, dress up and look respectable enough to suit this sea-going preacher."

He reached up under the thatch and took down a long package of irregular shape. It was greasy and stained his fingers as he began to unwrap it.

"We've got to do a little scouting around to find out how many whites he's got in his crew," suggested Doxey. "I rather think we can put Parut and his gang on that job."

"Parut can help, yes," said Wade, as he took out a new blued-steel revolver with a long barrel and began to wipe away the thick oil which coated it.

"We'll have to deal with a woman," suggested Doxey. "What if she should give us so much trouble that we'd have to——"

"We can't let a woman stand between us and this chance," replied Wade.

"Well, if we start this thing, we've got to be ready to go to any extreme. No half measures. A woman left alive would be the means of hanging us, and we're pretty deep in as it is."

"I've thought of that, Dox. This is our chance. If we don't grab it, we're stuck here another year or two; maybe ten. Any old day we may be picked up by the coast guard. I don't trust Parut or any of the other natives."

"No, we can't hang on here forever and be safe," agreed Doxey.

"There's another thing," reminded Wade, going on with his revolver-cleaning. "It's been easy enough to keep out of sight while no whites were on the island. But you know there's a possibility of a trading station being put in here, with white men. And plantation concessions are likely to be going any day. We can't expect to keep hidden here even under the best of circumstances, for the natives can't be trusted too far. But there's another little thing that got into my mind this morning when I saw that Holy Joe boat."

"What's that?"

"This visit of the *Gospel Argonaut* with

Salvation Jessup and his wife may mean that there's a gang of missionaries going to squat down on Andrus Island, build a church and establish a colony. That for us is good night and a bunch of lilies on our graves."

"Doggone it! You've just about hit the thing!" exclaimed Doxey. "We can't take chances on that happening!"

"It's strike now, or lose out," said Wade. "We've got to gamble the thing out as it falls. We may not need to kill anybody—couple of the crew if they act up, maybe—but I've thought out what we could do if we manage to take the schooner."

"Go ahead," urged Doxey. "We've no time to lose. That schooner may jump out this afternoon."

"If we can get aboard her and take her, just hold up the parson and tell him what we want, we can drop him and his wife at some island where ships don't show up for a year at a stretch. Then get away to Singapore, or lay a course for Australia or any place we pick, preferably some port where Parson Jessup isn't known very well."

"You mean you'll try and palm yourself off on port authorities as Parson Jessup?" Doxey was astounded at the idea.

"No, not necessarily. It'll be handy to do it just to the extent that is necessary to get out of the schooner in the port we pick. What I'm thinking of is that the *Gospel Argonaut* is known as a missionary schooner. That prevents us being boarded by coast guards if we run into a cutter at sea. Easy enough at a distance for you to wear the wife's sunbonnet and a skirt, and I can parson up in his clothes. Seen through glasses, it all looks missionary. We may not even run the schooner into a port—get close enough in to land near one, scuttle her and land on the beach. Then just drift into town. It'll be months before either Jessup and his wife are picked up off the island we leave 'em on, or months before the fact that the *Gospel Argonaut* is missing, comes out. She's bound to have a supply of cash on board. We'll be fixed to lose ourselves anywhere we pick. Of course, that's just a rough plan. We can change it as things fall."

Doxey considered the matter a few minutes.

"We may have to wipe out the lot, and force the native crew to work the schooner for us until we've got a position that suits us."

Wade held up a hand for attention.

"Dox," he said slowly, "there's no limit to what we may have to do. All or everything goes by the board—white men, the woman, natives. This chance has dropped from the skies and we've got to grab it."

"I'm on. What's the first move?"

"Try and get Salvation Jessup here to the shack. Bring him alone, or not at all. Make a play with him that we've kept by ourselves here in the jungle, rather than mix with the natives. Bring out our simple virtues and play the common sailor. We're rough chaps with the usual sailor faults, but we haven't forgotten to be decent just because we've been shipwrecked. Before you see Jessup, fix it with Parut and his gang of thieves that if the natives spill the beans on us, we'll kill a few when the schooner's gone. But better than that, scare the old Benggala that a missionary station is to come to Andrus Island. Then tip Parut that all we want to do is get away in the schooner, and that if he'll help us, we'll work on Jessup to give up the idea of sending missionaries to stick on the island."

"I get you!" said Doxey with enthusiasm. "We've got to play the natives against Jessup, but under cover. Fix 'em so they'll make him welcome and hold him in port overnight, but fill 'em full of a scare about missionaries'll come if we don't sail away with Jessup."

"You've got it, Dox! We'll work the thing out as we go along."

"Then we'd better get into our civilized duds."

"Sure! We don't want Jessup to suspect we've been here seventeen months. Our clothes are badly worn, but that's all right—they're clean and fresh. We'll have to plant a shipwreck about three months old on him."

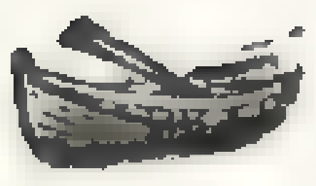
They went into the brush behind the house, and pulling out some vines that grew down over the rocks, brought out two bundles wrapped in dried *nipa* thatch.

Wade got into faded, sea-washed dungarees that were bleached so that only a faint trace of the original blue remained. Next he put on a cotton shirt, and old canvas shoes. A yellowed straw hat without a brim completed his costume.

Doxey put on a pair of wide-bottomed seaman's white trousers and rolled them up about his ankles. A gingham shirt and a cloth watch-cap turned him into a foremast hand. A pair of old sea-boots with the tops cut off covered his bare feet.

They returned to the shack and laid their plans in detail.

III



WHEN Wade and Doxey arrived at the foot of the glade and pressed the leaves aside from the same jungled rise where Wade had observed the *Gospel Argonaut*, the schooner still lay at anchor. The native canoes no longer hovered about her. And the whale-boat with the canvas covering which Wade had seen fast to the schooner's stern was missing.

"Jessup's ashore," said Wade. "Look! There's the whale-boat on the beach just off the houses!"

Doxey shifted his position in order to get a view of the native village. He could make out, over the tops of the second-growth brush that was between the houses and the palm grove that intervened, he could see a gathering of natives.

"Maybe his wife's ashore with him," said Doxey.

They studied the schooner again. They could not make out anybody aboard her except the native crew forward, three or four men idling under a tarpaulin that had been stretched for an awning.

"All the better if she is ashore," said Wade. "If she hears your sad story, she'll want the parson to help us. Just remember that it's not too far to where I am, but too rough a place for a woman. And while I'm not as sick as I think I am, I'm sure I'm going to die and want a preacher to say a prayer."

"I'll see Parut first," assented Doxey. "Watch out for me coming with Jessup. I'll manage to cross that open spot this side of the rocky swale. When you see us, you'll have time enough to get back to the shack and pile under the mats and be an awful sick sailor when I bring the parson alongside."

Pushing through the foliage into the open, Doxey got out on the white sand of the beach and trudged briskly away. The clothing, now that he had gone about nearly naked for months, felt oppressive to him. But he hurried along, knowing that he must appear to have hurried when he approached Jessup; must have the appearance of a man who had hastened on a pressing mission and was terribly troubled about his sick shipmate in the jungle shack.

Following the bends of the beach, it was not more than half a mile to the outskirts of the native village. And as Doxey approached the outlying palm grove, he saw far across the bay on the side away from Wade's position, Parut's big outrigger anchored at the end of the most distant reef.

"Rotten luck!" he remarked. "I can't lose time now to wait for the old pirate. I'll have to brace things out, and look Parut up later when we've tried our hand with Jessup."

He covered the last turn of the beach and found himself on the last incurving of the bay. The native gathering was not far from the beach, close to where the whale-boat was drawn up on the shingle.

The native boats in that vicinity were deserted while the natives clustered about a white man. He seemed to be addressing them in some formal way. And near him was a strange box-like object that had apparently been carried up from the boat-beach.

"An organ!" declared Doxey. "That's what he brought ashore in the whale-boat! Good! That means he intends to stop a while; maybe a couple of days. Fine! That gives us time to work things out."

He paused a few minutes in the palm grove, going over in his mind again the story he had prepared to tell the missionary. Then, ready for the plunge, he moved across the sandy patch and drew toward the native crowd.

He lingered on the edge of the throng a few minutes, studying Jessup. He was a thin-faced man of kindly expression, with gray eyes that seemed weak in their coloring. He squinted over amber glasses with lowered chin as he preached a simple kind of sermon, or what he probably considered a sermon. It was mostly in English, but here and there he interlarded words from Malay, or Tamil, or Chinese or the *bêche-de-mer* of the island dialects of various natives.

He wore a waistcoat of black silk, that buttoned close up under his chin, and a celluloid collar that seemed made for a man of twice his bulk. He was a man of perhaps well over fifty, with hair graying about his ears. His straw hat was of native make, light and of fine workmanship, but it had been pinched in here and there until its shape was hard to tell. It looked like some queer growth of fungus such as might be found about stumps in a swamp. He wore a frayed suit of pongee cloth which was wrinkled.

"So I have come to bring to your island the comforts of religion—the white man's religion," concluded Jessup. "Tonight we will have hymn-singing, and from this instrument you will hear the music of civilization."

He pointed toward the battered old melodeon with its yellowed keys; its treadle-board was covered with a piece of red carpet which showed where the feet of the player had worn it almost through; the music-prop that once had been an ornately filigreed piece of wood work was only a wreck of its former self, being now held together with lines of string tied so that the sheets of music would be held in place in spite of any breeze.

Doxey pressed into the crowd of natives, and lifting his hand, sang out loudly:

"Could you come and have a look at my ship-mate, sir? He ain't so very sick, but he thinks he's like to die, and he wants the prayer of a parson to comfort him, sir."

The missionary started back in surprize at hearing his own language coming out of the native throng. He peered over his amber glasses in amazement until he had located Doxey.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "A white brother here! I thought there were only natives where ——"

He broke off and gave a gasping cough behind his hand. He seemed incapable of saying any more for the time. With open mouth he continued to stare at Doxey, his eyes studying carefully the sun-browned man before him.

"You're Salvation Jessup, eh, matey?" went on Doxey. "I hopes you don't mind my manner of speakin', sir, but we've heard of you and how you always gives a hand up to sailors what's run afoul of bad weather."

"I'm proud of that name, my good man," said Jessup with a reassuring smile. "The greatest profession in the world is that which dispenses salvation. That name is my badge of glory. It tells of my success with savage creatures in benighted places such as this out-of-the-way island. Salvation Jessup! It's the name of service in the name of the Creator."

"Thought you wouldn't mind my bein' so bold as to call you by it, sir. No offense meant, matey. You're a sailorman like myself, I takes it."

There was a trace of cockney accent in Doxey's way of talking, and now he pulled at his forelock in an old fashioned salute, holding his battered hat in his hand.

"I am an apostle of the sea, yes," said Jessup. "But what can I do for you, my good man?"

"I'm a respectable sailorman, sir," proceeded Doxey. "Me and a shipmate of mine, we're beached here—some weeks it's been—I've lost track. Sickish, my mate is, and when I tells him the missionary packet's in, he says as how he'd like a word with the parson, if he'd take the trouble to talk with a sailorman that ain't long for this world. Not that he's to die, as I looks at it, but a bit of comfort would do him good, and a bit of prayer to buck up his courage like, sir."

Jessup glanced up through the palm grove at the native houses in the edge of the jungle.

"Where is your shipmate?" he asked taking in the thatched roofs.

"Not here, sir, in the village. We never took to livin' with the natives. Not our style. Ain't right, sir, as we looks at it. So we made a little hut in a little valley, and kept by ourselves. It's not far, sir; just a bit of a walk. If you'd be so kind as to come along with me, I'll show it."

"You say you were shipwrecked? How long ago was that?" asked Jessup.

He moved slowly toward Doxey, pushing his way through the natives about him.

"Back a few weeks, sir. The *Nelson Leeds* it was—bark out of Hong Kong for Java. Went down in a typhoon, way to the nor'rad, and all hands lost but us. Most likely you've heard."

"No, I haven't heard of the loss of the *Leeds*, but I do know there was a typhoon a few weeks ago."

"No, no chance for the news to be out," said Doxey. "Not a ship's been in sight of this crimson island, beggin' pardon, sir, for my manner of speakin', but it's hard to be lost to everybody and stuck with a lot of 'eathens on a 'eathen island of the likes of this place."

Jessup stood now outside the circle of natives and surveyed Doxey with critical eye, noting the sun-blackened skin of the man, his ragged but clean clothing, his unshaven face and his long locks. Apparently the missionary was satisfied after the scrutiny, for his manner became kindlier than ever.

"You do appear to be in hard straits, my man. And I'm glad to see that you've preserved your respectability when beyond the bounds of civilized influence. Might I ask, are you an Australian?"

"Yes, sir, Sydney man, years back. Been in Yankee ships a lot, and I've lost something of my accent. Hope you won't mind, sir."

"And your shipmate? What is he?"

"Oh, him! Yankee American chap. Yes, we kept by ourselves. Not but what these natives ain't good enough in their ways, but you knows natives, I dare say. But we don't put much on beachcombers, me and my matey. Not that we're what you'd call church boys—a bit rough in our ways—but we do have respect for men of the cloth. For that reason we thought as perhaps you'd say a prayer for a chap that's most likely never to see his own land again this side of the grave. 'This Salvation Jessup, I knows of 'im', I tells my matey. 'Good sort of a Holy Joe', I tells him, beggin' your pardon, sir. 'An', says I to 'im as I thinks it over, 'Salvation Jessup's not the sort of parson to leave you out in the cold when it comes to a prayer. He can't refuse', I tells my matey. And I promises I'll bring you along back if I has to fetch you in my own arms, sir."

Doxey lowered his eyes to the sand and sniffed, as if his rude emotions had been stirred at the thought of his sick shipmate being disappointed in the matter of religious consolation.

"Of course, I'll do what I can," said Jessup soothingly. "I know seamen and their ways. Just a minute, until I reassure my wife."

He moved out on an open spot of the beach and waved his hands to the figure of the sun-bonneted woman, who had just appeared on the quarter-deck. Then he cupped his hands to his face and called—

"Just a little walk—to see a sick sailor, my dear."

She waved her hand back to him in understanding.

"Now then, my man," said Jessup briskly. "I'll go with you. I'm only in for fresh water and a supply of fruit for my good crew, and I thought I might as well sing a hymn or two in the cool of the evening to lift these poor souls to thoughts of their Creator. And as you've called on me for service, indeed, I can not refuse. It would be a bad demonstration if I were to neglect my own kind of people when I'm here preaching the religion of the white man. So while my water casks are being filled, I've time to see your comrade. Lead—and I follow, my man, in order that I may lead."

He laughed whimsically.

"Thank you, sir," said Doxey. "It's up the beach a ways,"

He turned toward the palm grove, and Jessup followed, paying no heed to the disappointed chatter of the natives, who saw the man who was entertaining them lured away by one of the inhabitants of the glade.

They were a nondescript lot, these islanders of Andrus—mostly half-Malay fishermen and their families of native stock, a few from the Sulu group, other vagrants blown south by storms from Palawan, and drifters from the tin mines of Banka who were too careless ever to make the attempt to get back whence they came.

IV

DOXEY kept well in advance of the missionary, wanting to avoid now a conversation which might bristle with questions. And when Doxey had revealed himself across the open spot where he knew Wade would be warned of their coming, he slackened pace and gained the opening to the glade by a roundabout path.

When they reached the clearing before the half-concealed hut, Doxey waited for Jessup to come up with him.

"I had better rest here in the shade of these bushes," said Jessup, panting. "Go and tell your shipmate that I've come. So that's your domicile, is it? How perfectly picturesque!"

He sat down on a moss-grown rise of lava-rock twenty feet from the hut. There was a spring nearby, and the shade was grateful.

"Very good, sir," and Doxey trotted across the clearing to the hut.

Jessup looked about him with interested eyes, noting the age of some of the cuttings of vines, studying the narrow footpath worn in the soil, and altogether taking in what could be seen of the clearing and the hut with shrewd eyes. When he saw Doxey disappear in among the vines which grew down over the crude platform which, with the low-hanging thatch, formed a narrow veranda, the missionary got to his feet and advanced toward the house. He was within ten feet of it before he stopped, and hearing voices in a low tone inside, he casually sauntered nearer, until he was within reach of the protecting greenery coming down over the roof.

Doxey appeared in a minute.

"If you'll come in, sir," he suggested.

"Perhaps it would be better if you brought him out—at least, to the porch. I think the air inside must be close for him, and I'm sure I'd find it depressing."

"He's too weak to be on his feet," said Doxey. "Just a look, sir, and a few words of comfort."

A low moan came from inside the hut.

"Why don't the parson come?" called Wade in a weak voice.

"In a minute, matey," called Doxey soothingly. 'The parson, he's a bit beat out by the heat of the walk. He'll be in and say the prayer as soon's he's had a mouthful of air."

"Don't leave me alone, pal," pleaded Wade.

Doxey went in again, and winked slyly at the figure lying on the mats and covered by strips of *tapa*-cloth. On the hard earth which served as a flooring, there were the remains of fruit and cups of coconut-shell filled with water.

"He's suspicious," whispered Doxey. "Don't rush things."

Then, in a tone loud enough to be heard by the missionary, he went on:

"Could you try and come out to the half-deck? I'll give you a hand, matey. Too hot it is in here for you, and you'll feel the better for a bit of fresh."

Wade began to mumble and moan again. "I ain't got the stren'th, matey. Rather die as I am, flat on my back, but I don't want to die heathen-like, especially when there's a sky-pilot near me."

He pretended an effort to rise, but sank back on the mats. Doxey made a show of helping him to get up, but abandoned it. Wade, being covered by the *tapa*, was in a drenching sweat that revealed itself in great drops on his face.

"I've chewed the leaf of the tree that stimulates the circulation," he whispered to Doxey. "It's just beginning to work—fetch him while my heart is going fast and let him feel my pulse."

Doxey appeared on the veranda. Jessup was wiping his face with a blue silk handkerchief.

"If you please, sir, my mate aint't got the kick in him to come out. And if you won't come in, I'd say you've wasted your breath to visit. Can't you just give him a look, sir?"

Jessup put on his hat with careful deliberation.

"If he's unable to come out, I'll go in. I never fail in my duty."

He moved forward and climbed to the ramshackle platform and, following Doxey, peered into the box-like hut.

Wade moaned softly at the sight of the missionary. Doxey brought a great pillow made by bundling up dead leaves and tying them with a net of rattan. Jessup stepped near to the patient, blinking eyes in an effort to see in the shelter after the sunglare outside.

"I feels better now," said Wade. "Comes and goes, that weak feeling. If I'm to g parson, I wants a good discharge, a bit of prayin', and I'm ready for the next commish."

He grinned a weak smile, and let his head sway from side to side as he lay back against the pillow. Doxey handed him a half cocoanut-shell cup filled with water, and Wade drank greedily.

"I rather think it's the fever," said Jessup as he bent down over the patient.

Wade's fingers closed over the revolver under the *tapa*.

"Oh, yes; fever off and on till I'm wore out. Now I'm bilged for want of proper grub, the need of right medicine, and not having a shot of booze to pick me up and put me on my pins. I'd be all right in a few days if I was to have proper ship's grub—not fancy, sir—but a whack at a mess-kit with something in it that'd stick to a man's ribs. My heart, it goes like a propeller when a ship's got her nose in a green one." Wade held out his left hand.

Jessup, now able to see well enough to take in the details of Wade's appearance, scanned the bearded face closely. And as he lifted the limp hand he kept his eyes on Wade's.

Doxey watched the missionary closely, standing on the other side of Wade. Doxey was ready for anything, and noted the keenness of the missionary's gaze. It seemed to betoken more than mere medical interest, though it was natural that a man brought to see a sailor reported sick, would study carefully the aspect of the patient.

"Yes, it's fever," declared Jessup as he dropped Wade's hand. Turning to Doxey, the missionary said:

"I'm happy to tell you that your comrade will be better in a few days. This weakness is only temporary; I'd say due to excitement because I've come, rather than to the fever itself. There's vigor in the heart action, though the circulation is deranged. Let us give thanks to the Creator, and I shall return back to the village and my schooner."

"I knew you'd pull through, matey," cried Doxey. "You hears what the parson says. You'll be fit again, give you time!"

"If I could only have decent ship's grub," said Wade. "I know I'd pick up in a day or two."

"We will now pray for your speedy recovery," said Jessup, and kneeling beside Wade, he said a short prayer.

But though Wade and Doxey bowed their heads, Jessup did not keep his head so low that he was prevented from studying Wade.

"I've done all that's in my power," said Jessup, as he got to his feet. "Farewell, brother, and may your illness end in good time."

Nodding to Doxey, the missionary turned to the door and moved out on the platform.

"Just a minute, sir," called Doxey, following outside. "I thank you kindly, sir, for comin', but I'm just wonderin' if we couldn't do somethin' to get my matey out of this."

"How do you mean?" asked Jessup.

"This way: I'm a strong man and a good seaman. If my pal here could get proper grub, not fancy, but forecastle chow, he'd pick up and be hisself again. And if you'll take him, I'll go in your crew and stand double watches, sir. For just passage for us two to the nearest port of call you make."

Jessup considered for a minute.

"My crew are all natives," he said. "And I'm over-manned as it is."

"You'd save a white man's life, sir!" pleaded Doxey. "I'll work my fingers to the bone. May be weeks and weeks afore a schooner or a coast guard shows up and we may miss her, even if she comes in and anchors, what with me havin' to keep watch on my pal. Help us out, sir!"

"I'll ask the mate, Mr. Langton, about it," said Jessup. "He's really my sailing master, but on the ship's papers I'm owner and master."

"Can't you use more'n one white man aboard?" asked Doxey. "Couldn't I be handy? Bosun, the wheel, sails, but I'll do common sailor work as well."

"You see, on account of my wife—and the cabin's small——"

"We don't ask after-quarters, sir," broke in Doxey eagerly. "For'ard for us, and not a bit of trouble; only to the next port you makes. What good be we here to ourselfs or anybody else? We'd rather be at work, 'stead of livin' like a couple of beachcombers. Some could have it easy, livin' with the natives, but we don't stomach that. We're not vagabonds, sir, but stranded seamen. Look at this place! Marooned, that's what we be, and shut away from our kind. No wonder my pal's sick, as I'll be if I have to go on this way!"

"I'll put the matter before Mr. Langton. I don't want to bring you on board until I've discussed the matter with him. No need to hurry. We'll be in here several days. My wife's not well, and she needs quiet. You'll hear from me again."

"Thank you, sir, thank you!" cried Doxey.

Jessup pulled his hat down over his eyes and, with a farewell gesture of the hand, strode across the clearing toward the glade, leaving Doxey on the little veranda.

V

WADE had thrown off the *tapa* and was sitting up on the mats smoking a cigaret when Doxey returned, having watched the missionary out of sight into the little valley leading to the beach.

"So far, so good," remarked Wade.

"Think he'll take us?" asked Doxey soberly.

He lighted a cigaret and sat down cross-legged on a mat.

"It's an even bet. He may have strung you along just to get away without an argument. That would be easier than having you chase him around the island."

Doxey nodded. He was not especially hopeful.

"Told me first he had slipped in for water and fruit, and would have time to see you while his casks were being filled. Just now he said he was in for several days."

"Slippery bird," agreed Wade. "Still, there's a chance that he'll want to use us."

"I don't believe he has the slightest idea of taking us along or ever coming back here. What I was after was how many white men he had and it looks as if the mate is the only one."

"Parut can find out easy enough."

"Didn't see one of his crew ashore," went on Doxey. "It looks as if he had natives tow his organ-boat in with a canoe."

He wrinkled his brow in thought, and seemed suddenly downcast and doubtful.

"Are you getting cold feet on the plan of taking that schooner?" challenged Wade.

Doxey shook his head negatively.

"No, no," he said, "I'm just thinking things over."

Wade apparently did not believe him.

"If you're wanting to hedge out, I'll tell you we can't be any worse off than we are. We'll never find a schooner in here that carries only two white men, and one a parson. Certainly, that preacher hasn't got you bluffed, Dox."

Doxey stood up and, bending his head forward, paced back and forth, stopping now and then at the door to glance out and across the clearing, as if he expected to see Jessup lurking in the brush.

"If Jessup slips away before night, we can't stop him," said Wade. "We need a little more time. But if he stays over till morning, we've got to pull off some kind of a job. Can't depend on what he says, either about staying several days, or having any idea of taking us."

"You're right," agreed Doxey. "It's the last chance for us and we can't let this parson stand in our way, no, nor his wife."

"You're shaky," charged Wade, scanning Doxey's face with keen eyes. "You say it right enough, but you've been worried up to now. What's on your mind?"

Doxey came to a stop before Wade.

"Yes, I have been worried a little," he admitted. "Didn't want to put anything into your mind until I was sure you saw the thing yourself."

"Saw what?" asked the astonished man.

"There was something about Jessup that gave me something of a turn while he was here with us."

Wade dropped his cigaret into a shell full of water. He stood up and walked close to Doxey. "What was it?" he demanded.

"This Salvation Jessup packs a gun."

Wade burst into laughter.

"Sure! I saw that, right enough. He carries it up his sleeve, probably on a rubber strap. I thought at first that he had a stiff elbow, until I saw that he didn't want to swing his wrist out and away from his other hand. He kept his left hand close to the cuff of his right sleeve, and the cuff hid the little gun."

"I wondered if you'd noticed it," said Doxey.

"Didn't bother me any, Dox. He'd be a fool to run around this island, and come up here to see a couple of beachers like us, without a gun. And for that little pea-shooter he's got up his sleeve, I'll make him eat it!" He laughed derisively.

"Notice anything else beside the gun?" asked Doxey in a tone so quiet that Wade was startled into sudden silence.

He turned and stared at Doxey, having understood a hidden menace in the tone rather than in the words.

"Say! What did you get that I didn't? Out with it! We've no time to waste playing horse!"

"He recognized you," said Doxey.

Wade stood immobile for more than a minute, frozen into a statue. Then, with a gasp, he sat down on the mat.

"Recognized me!" he whispered. "What makes you think so?"

"While he prayed, he looked you over carefully as if he was sizing you up with a picture he'd seen. Of course, he's most likely had a police circular with your picture, same as we saw in Shanghai."

"Possible, yes," said Wade.

"I had my hand over my face while he prayed, and I watched him through my fingers. He bored you, combed you over and over. Of course, you couldn't watch him and play sick, but I had his number, right enough. And I'll bet he knows who both of us are."

"Then," said Wade, "that forces our hand. We've got to finish things tonight. If he gets away from Andrus, he'll send a coast guard cutter after us, and we're caught."

"That's what I've been turning over in my mind," said Doxey. "But there's a chance that the greater our danger with him, the easier we'll find it to take his schooner."

"How do you mean?"

"Just this way: That he'll pretend to want us aboard on the terms I offered. His plan would be to get us over the side of the *Gospel Argonaut*, and brig us. Then turn us over to the authorities. He knows there's a reward for both of us."

"By George, I'll bet you're right!" exclaimed Wade. "And that's why he took you up on working your passage if I could be taken to the first port. He saw his chance to let us capture ourselves!"

Doxey nodded.

"But if he decides against taking us, we've got to decide to take ourselves. If that schooner sails in the morning, we're aboard her. And that means she'll be *ours*."

"Get Parut up here, or hunt him up. Look out that you don't fall afoul of Jessup and his mate. We'll risk everything on this throw. Parut and his gang of pirates wouldn't like anything better than to cut that schooner off, and then hang the job on us, after they've killed us. We can't walk into that trap. First, we've got to be aboard the schooner, and promise Parut that we'll lay her on a reef for him as she sails but. Then the game for us is to *sail out*, and give him the slip. Rather, let Jessup and his mate sail her out, for if we stow away in the *Argonaut*, we won't show our hand until we're off the land and well clear of Parut and his gang. But he's got to help us get aboard for what he thinks is a cutting off job."

"He'll fall for it," said Doxey. "As you say, he'll know that he and his gang play safe, after they've looted the schooner, kill us and save our skins for the coast guard cutter. Hang it on the couple of white beachcombers. It'll be easier than Parut thinks, for the cutter skipper'll recognize our bodies. That'll be evidence enough for him who pulled off the piracy, and Parut'll get away with the goods and a whole skin."

"One thing we've got to bear in mind," cautioned Wade. "If Jessup already knows us, the instant we show our faces aboard the schooner ready for action, it'll be no quarter for us. We'll have to kill without hesitation unless we see we've got the drop. And we can't make any effort to save the woman."

"All hands and the ship's cook," said Doxey. "We'll never be able to handle his native crew unless we show 'em we mean business from the jump. And if they see we've killed off the whites, they'll understand well enough that we can't bother with how many dead natives we spill around the decks. We might as well hang for wolves as for lambs."

"Skip out and look up Parut," advised Wade.

Doxey took a drink of water, filled his pocket with a supply of native tobacco and set out without more ado for the glade and the native village.

VI

WADE lay in a clump of young bamboo near the beach end of the glade. Here he had a view of the bay, and he was watching the *Gospel Argonaut*.

It was well along in the afternoon. The schooner's white awnings glistened like bits of marble set into the blue background of the water. Under the quarter-deck awning, Wade could see the figure of a woman reclining in a deck chair. She appeared to be reading a book.

The whale-boat was still drawn up on the beach, and so far as Wade could judge, Jessup had not yet returned on board the schooner. Neither had the mate gone ashore; at least, the schooner's dingey was still in the falls. And the native crew seemed all aboard the schooner still, for the foredeck had plenty of brown figures under its tarpaulin awnings idling away the time.

Doxey, according to plan, was on his errand in the jungles behind the native village, dickering with Parut and his gang of cut-throats. There was every indication that the conference was going on in secret out of sight and sound of the village, for every fishing boat was drawn up on the beach and the bay was deserted of natives. It was mostly with the owners of boats that Parut held his power, for these fishermen were really secret pirates. Small game they played for, however, looking for their pickings from native craft which ventured into their waters from neighboring islands or anything that happened to be helpless after a storm. They never struck at anything that could fight, always made sure of just what they had to fight by pretending to be honest fishers, and never let anything alive escape once they struck.

Along the stretch of beach between him and the village, Wade could see scores of brown men wandering about in the groves. He knew, by the dilly-bags which most of them carried on their backs, that they were hill natives drawn to the village by the news of entertainment during the cool of the evening. The word had been passed from mouth to mouth up into the hills to the most isolated huts that a white man's schooner was in, and that there would be music and singing.

Also, they knew the boat to be a floating mission, which meant that prayer-papers, as they called the printed tracts which missionaries always gave out, would be the reward for coming. These papers were popular, sometimes being pinned up in huts as charms against evil if they had pictures, or burned and the ashes put in water and taken as medicine. These charm papers were famous for their powers of curing, especially if combined with native magic.

It was not very long before Wade heard a rustling in the brush on the side toward the village, but back in the heavier growths where there was a trail well off the beach.

"That'll be Doxey," he commented and, keeping still in case by any chance the person on the trail happened to be a native, Wade waited.

In a few minutes Doxey, crouching low so that he would not be exposed to view from the village as he broke from cover, got round on low ground and approached the clump of bamboos from the other side. He crawled slowly until he lay beside Wade.

"It's all right," he said as he wiped his streaming face after his run in the hot and confined trail. "I've fixed it with that old scar-face of a Parut. They'll throw about twenty boats out on the bay by sundown."

"Jessup see you?"

"He got a glimpse of me, but I didn't mind. Made it my business to go first to the old woman for some medicinal herbs for you, so that gave me an excuse for being back in the native village. I didn't hide from him, or make any effort to talk to him. Pretended I didn't know he was in sight. He's hob-nobbing with the old fellow known as the Benggala—that chap that's from India or Ceylon that's suspected of being an escaped convict from the Andamans. From what I picked up among the natives, the Benggala's passing himself off on Jessup as the boss of the island, which is easy enough on account of his being up better on English than any of the others."

"What's the program for Parut with us?"

"He'll come over himself with his own boat and pick us up after dark. When the fishing boats start out, some'll drift down to the end of the bay. Then nobody on the schooner can be suspicious there's any game, or tumble to the fact that one boat is coming down this way for any special reason."

"Good work!" said Wade. "But wouldn't it be a great scheme if we could get aboard while Jessup is singing his hymns?"

"We'll have to watch out and try it."

"See anything of the mate ashore?"

"No, and he hasn't been ashore. Not a soul has been on the beach but Jessup; not even any of the crew. His whale-boat with the organ was towed in by a native outrigger."

"If that's so, why can't we keep Jessup from getting back aboard the schooner? Just have some of Parut's men prevent any natives from towing Jessup back."

"Parut thought of that very thing himself," said Doxey. "Leave it to the old scoundrel to have every move in the game at his finger tips. But he says it won't be safe; natives friendly to Jessup might pick up the news of the plan, and the mate would come for Jessup with an armed party, or send an armed crew."

"Did you tell Parut we don't want to show our hand until we've got the schooner so we can get at the crew—until we're aboard without a fight?"

"He understands that there's to be no fight to get the schooner, except as a last resort. His job is to get us aboard unknown to any of Jessup's outfit, and we do the rest."

"Right. But suppose we're discovered on board while the schooner's still at anchor tonight. Even if we wipe out Jessup and his mate, we've got to run the reef-openings in the dark, and we can't make the breaks, even if we have the wind."

"Parut's fishing boats'll give us a tow out when we give him the signal."

"That would be nice," said Wade, "but for the fact that Parut might hang us up on a reef higher than a kite, and cut our throats after we've wiped out the whites for him."

"I think I've got him cinched so he won't try that little game. I've warned him that unless we get away with the *Gospel Argonaut*, a trading station and missionaries will be on Andrus, and that means government officials making regular inspections. I've also warned him that if the *Argonaut* is destroyed in this bay, every hut on the island'll be shelled out of existence by a couple of gunboats. He thinks I know more about the *Argonaut* than I've told, and that'll hold his hand, even if he and his men are greedy. The fact that old Benggala is playing island-boss with Jessup makes Parut afraid that Benggala would dominate the island under Jessup, or a missionary station. That's the game Parut wants to smash, and it's more to his interests to get the *Argonaut* clear away than it is to loot her."

"Fine," declared Wade. "You've got him sewn up for a fare-you-well. Now it's up to us to have enough wits to run this show so we can come out top dogs."

"If the mate and Mrs. Jessup go ashore for the hymn-singing this evening, we've got the schooner."

"Sure! There'll be just enough of the native crew on board to make it easy for us s to handle 'em and, after we've dropped a few, enough left to work the schooner. We may have wind, as it's time for the turn of the monsoon, but that'll mean an overcast sky. What I'd prefer is the usual land breeze and some of Parut's men anchored and showing lights on the reef-breaks. That'd give us markers to sail between, and we could get off the land in jig time."

The sun began to lag low for the western horizon, and the sky to redden. It would be less than half an hour to darkness now. The two watching men saw natives gathering piles of dry leaves and the rubbish of the palm groves and stacking them on the beach to provide illumination during the evening.

"Good!" said Wade. "That'll give us a line of lights between Jessup and the schooner and make it harder for him to see what's going on out in the bay. We can go alongside the *Argonaut* in her own shadow."

They watched the sun drop below the rim of the sea, and then the flaming sky slowly began to pale out. Only a few stars appeared at first, and these gradually waned as the night clouds slowly began to blanket the heavens.

The land breeze began to whisper from the hills over the jungle tops. And night, like a storm that breaks without warning on a clear day, struck Andrus Island.

VII

THE wheezy notes of the missionary's old melodeon and then the voice of Jessup lifted in song floated across the bay. Torches flared in the palm groves of the village, and the bonfires on the beach burst into flame. The lofty palms stood out against the brilliance like the headless poles of a hopfield.

Wade and Doxey remained in their hiding place at the edge of the jungle. Before long they saw, blackly outlined against the illuminations on shore, the fleet of fishers put off from the boat-beach like gigantic beetles fleeing from the blaring of music and the chorus of natives. For these natives knew the tunes and, supplying their own words, burst into song the instant they recognized the hymn which Jessup started.

The fleet paddled up the bay, taking care not to head out for the *Gospel Argonaut.* She lay on the outer edge of the flickering light which made the water dance, throwing a great beam of widening shadow beyond her to seaward. The vessel was visible only as a black bulk which from shore might be a rock or a reef-head. At times, when some fire flamed up afresh, her masts were outlined, but before long the fires had settled down to glowing embers and the schooner became barely visible.

When they were well out of range of the flares on shore, the fishers began to break into a line, some making far out for the reefs, others moving in toward the dark shore and taking their time about selecting anchorage.

Wade and Doxey went down to the beach and waited in the gloom. One of the boats that was far in advance of the line slowly bore down toward their position, gliding as silently under the still paddles as might a bit of driftwood on a surface current.

When the boat had come within easy hail, Doxey stooped and picked up two chunks of coral and struck them together thrice.

"*Aie, tuan,*" came the low voice of a native, and the two men knew that Parut had come for them.

They waded out on the smooth sand of the bottom, taking care not to cut their feet on jagged bits of coral which cropped up through the hard floor of the bay.

In cautious tones Doxey spoke at intervals so that Parut could steer for them through the gloom, for while he could see Parut's boat against the lights of the water behind, Parut only had darkness ahead of him.

In a few minutes the outrigger was alongside. There were only two paddlers in the big canoe with Parut, which gave the white men plenty of room to lie out in the boat and be well concealed when it drew near the *Gospel Argonaut.*

"Is the woman on shore?" asked Doxey as he crawled up over the gunwale and, dripping, twisted himself into the boat.

"*Prempuan, tidak,*" said Parut in Malay, which was, "woman, no."

Parut was barely visible in the stern, being squatted on a low box at the feet of the paddlers.

"And the *maarlim*—the mate?" asked Doxey.

"He is not on the land," said Parut in Malay. "No boat has come. We took good care to watch, *tuan.*"

"All right. Paddle down toward the schooner, but take care that you approach her from the side away from the lights, that we may watch her for a time without being watched ourselves. We must know how careful they are on board as to what approaches."

Parut gave the word to the paddlers and, sitting on mats in the bottom of the boat, Wade and Doxey exposed only their heads over the gunwales.

The boat swung slowly in order to get in between the schooner and the outer reefs, to bring her to bear so that she would loom between Parut's boat and the lights ashore.

The sound of music and singing had subsided. The voice of Jessup, preaching fervently, came over the water. But there were stretches of silence, for Jessup spoke a sentence and waited for it to be translated and the voice of the translator did not carry to Parut's boat. Thus Jessup's voice came intermittently, with long pauses, as if he had to think what he should say next.

On the schooner there was but one riding-light visible. It appeared to be a lantern hanging under the quarter-deck awning; and this lantern seemed to be shaded by a length of canvas hanging loosely from the whipping overhead.

The progress of Parut's boat was slow, but it was gradually worked out behind the schooner, where it was not exposed in the light tracks glimmering over the bay. Some of the fishing boats had also worked back to the lower end of the bay, guiding themselves according to plan and in accordance with where Parut's boat would be. Some went between the schooner and the shore, while others swung farther out beyond Parut. In this way, there seemed no plan on foot among the boats, only a careless drifting about of fishermen.

Doxey had warned Parut that care must be taken against any maneuver that would look like an enveloping movement against the schooner. If Jessup or his mate suspected anything wrong, the whole game would be upset. The boats simply drifted about, the fishers casting nets or pulling in fish on their lines. Only Parut's boat was allowed to attempt close work with the schooner, and that moved about with seeming aimlessness, the paddlers stopping now and then to cast a line.

Within half an hour after Wade and Doxey had been picked up, the outrigger's paddlers were hauling in fish within a hundred feet of the *Gospel Argonaut.* And they lay in the schooner's own shadow to seaward, so that Wade and Doxey had a good view of the quarter-deck. They could see Mrs. Jessup, still wearing her sunbonnet, sitting in a deck-chair reading under the lantern, her back to them.

"I wish we could locate the whereabouts of that mate," whispered Wade. "If he's below in the cabin, and he must be, we'd run into trouble if we boarded now. He might pounce upon us from anywhere."

"All I can make out in the waist is a couple of heads over the bulwarks," said Doxey. "And I'd say they're native sailors watching us."

"I'll bet that's where the mate is," decided Wade. "He's in the dark there, with the sailors, keeping watch. I can see somebody move from side to side every little while. The fishing boats make him nervous and he's keeping a careful eye on us."

Occasionally Mrs. Jessup lifted a stick on which was tied strips of paper, and drove away the insects attracted to her reading lantern. Over her shoulders she wore a silken shawl, and she held an edge of it when she fanned herself with a big palm-leaf fan now and then.

The hymn-singing had started on shore again, and the heavy voice of Jessup boomed out over the shriller voices of the singing natives.

But Parut's boat gave little attention to what was going on ashore. They could not see to the shore anyway, and the other men of Parut's gang were taking care that nothing happened from that side which would interfere with the white men lurking near the schooner.

As they watched the quarter-deck, hoping to see the mate go aft, and therefore know where he was without any doubt, Wade and Doxey saw Mrs. Jessup rise abruptly. She turned down the wick of the lantern and blew out the flame. Now she could be seen only as a black silhouette against the lights ashore.

"That's rotten luck!" breathed Wade. "Now we never will be able to get a sight of the mate!"

"Suppose we speak the schooner," suggested Doxey. "Let Parut hail in Malay and talk with the native sailors. That may give us some idea of where the mate is; he may order the sailors to keep quiet."

"We might try it," said Wade. "It'll look natural enough, and dispel any suspicion the mate may have as to our intentions. Certainly, a native boat that was up to anything shady, wouldn't hail the crew."

"And if we were to speak in English," said Doxey, "the mate might be willing to talk to us. He'd be surprized to hear a white man speak, because I don't believe that Jessup has been near the schooner to tell him there are a couple of beachcombers on Andrus."

"If he'd let us aboard, or lean over the rail, we might put a bullet into him," suggested Wade. "That'd make it simple for us; just swarm the crew."

Doxey whispered to Parut to push in a little closer to the schooner.

VIII

"SHEER off with that boat!"

It was a growling voice from amidships of the *Gospel Argonaut*, and Wade and Doxey knew the command came from Langton, the mate of Jessup's schooner.

"No come close, *tuan;* just want fish," called Parut.

"You find your fish somewhere else," came the reply from the bulwarks.

Parut broke out in Malay, protesting to the native sailors that they must tell the white man the fishers intended no harm, and that anyhow, the bay belonged to them and they intended to fish where they liked.

Wade and Doxey heard the native sailors telling the mate what was said.

"You clear out!" commanded the mate, without bothering to speak through an interpreter. "Get under weigh—or I'll blow a few holes through you and your boat. I guess you can understand that."

Parut demurred in whining Malay, while the paddles were thumped on the gunwale to make the mate believe his order was about to be obeyed.

The hymn-singing had stopped, and Parut heard the low blowing of a conch-shell from one of the lookout boats of his fleet. He whispered to Doxey, and gave the word to the paddlers to shoot out past the bow of the schooner. It was then that they saw the whale-boat was putting off from shore, towed by a native canoe.

"His wife put out that lantern as a signal!" breathed Doxey. "Somebody has tipped Jessup that things are wrong out here, or the mate passed the word to bring Jessup back aboard by dousing the lantern."

"I wonder if this brown idol has given us the double-cross," said Wade, speaking a code-language that Parut could not understand. "Somebody has messed our game."

"Let's lay low and see what's going on," advised Doxey.

Against the dying lights that flickered dimly over the water they saw the canvas-covered whale-boat making for the schooner under tow.

"We can't let Jessup get away," persisted Wade. "He recognized me; don't forget that."

"We might hail Jessup, and you tell him I've brought you along, ready to be put aboard in case he decided to take us with him."

Wade did not reply. He motioned to Parut to swing the canoe back behind the schooner, where the mate would not see it, for he was now watching Jessup's progress from shore.

The canoe, towing the whale-boat, was heading so as to come under the counter of the schooner. And Jessup was sitting in the bow of the canoe. The organ, which stuck up under its canvas cover like a great hump on the whale-boat, strung out far astern on a long line.

As Parut's canoe glided in order to bring the schooner's stern abeam, the towing canoe was just swinging in past the stern to go alongside the starboard side of the schooner, the side near the shore. This threw the missionary in high relief against waning bonfires. Parut's boat came into the long, wide shadow of the whale-boat with its shrouded burden.

Jessup's canoe disappeared from view, moving slowly to the side of the schooner, where the ladder was dropped by the mate. The boat with the organ, its way falling off as it rounded slowly to the tow-line, hung under the schooner's stern.

"What's the trouble? Why was the light put out?" they heard Jessup ask in low tones.

"Lot of fishing boats prowling around," said Langton. "It looks suspicious to me with you ashore. We've got to look out for these birds."

There was the creaking of the sea-ladder, and the thump of its steps against the side as Jessup swung up to the bulwarks.

"I'll have the whale-boat swung inboard," said the mate.

"Let her lie alongside for now," said Jessup. "Don't like the looks of so many native boats myself. Get the crew out so we'll be ready."

The fishing boats between them and the shore seemed to hold the attention of Jessup and Langton. Parut's men had drawn in closer, and were purposely making something of a racket to draw notice across the bows of the schooner. Jessup and the mate moved to the forecastle head, talking in low tones, while the native canoe made fast the painter to the sea-ladder, leaving the whale-boat trailing a trifle astern of the schooner, dancing on the ripples made by the paddlers. The tide swung her slowly and she fell round under the fairing of the *Gospel Argonaut.*

Wade whispered a few words to Doxey and then gave directions to Parut. The paddles began to move, the canoe glided under the schooner's stern and snuggled close to the whale-boat.

Doxey slipped overboard and hung to the bow of the whale-boat. Wade handed him the revolver. As Parut's canoe slipped past, Wade went overboard also. Parut's canoe shot away from them into the schooner's shadow again and slowly drew out to seaward. In a few minutes it was a hundred yards from the schooner, and heading to cross its bows, while Parut began to call to the other fishers, saying in Malay that he had all the fish he wanted, and was going in.

This confab with the other boats served to distract the attention of Jessup and the mate from what was going on astern. They asked their native sailors to translate what was passing between Parut and the others. The clatter of voices covered any noises made by Wade and Doxey as they pulled themselves up the ends of the whale-boat and crawled under the loose edges of the canvas covering.

There was room enough for them under the canvas, for, while it hung limply over bow and stern and trailed over the gunwales, there was nothing in the big whale-boat but the melodeon, which peaked the canvas upward in the center like the pole of a tent.

They could hear Parut gabbling away and the waning voices of the fishers as they hauled in for shore. The whale-boat scraped idly against the schooner, and in a quarter of an hour there was only the distant chatter of the boatmen as they got their boats on the beach.

Jessup and the mate came to the quarter-deck, satisfied that their alarm about the native boats had been needless. Wade heard the missionary say that the fruit and water would be out the first thing in the morning, and that they would sail immediately.

"Andrus Island has seen Salvation Jessup, anyway," they heard him say. "I'm glad I stopped. It would have been a mistake to have passed this place, and we had to have a good supply of water and fruit. We kill two birds with one stone."

They heard Langton pass the word to the *serang* to hook the whale-boat to the falls and hoist her aboard. In a few minutes Wade and Doxey felt the boat being towed forward, and presently the rattle of hooks forward and aft. They swung into the air to the creaking of blocks and the grunting counts of the native seamen as they hauled on the tackle. The whale-boat dropped into the skids, the gripes were secured, and the canvas was laced down all round the boat to protect the organ from moisture and any sudden squall of rain.

It was stifling hot under the canvas, but the two white men were content. As the crew went away forward, Doxey cut a slit in the canvas cover close to the gunwale that was next the schooner's bulwark, which gave them air.

"We've turned the trick," whispered Wade gleefully. "She sails in the morning. There's a small water breaker here in the stern, and a bag of biscuits. We can hold on until after dark tomorrow night, which means we'll be well to sea. We'll catch Jessup off guard, and we've got this beauty of a schooner."

IX

OUT of sight of land, and heading southwest under a quartering breeze, the *Gospel Argonaut* drove through the South China Sea in the cool of the evening. The stars hung low, so near at hand that they seemed adrift in the sky and in danger of losing their brilliance under the sleek swells that mirrored them.

The schooner had sailed that morning from Andrus Island, leaving word with the natives that she was sailing north and would run through Balabac Strait. But once she was off the island and had lost it, she swung to the southwest for open water, a course on the chart that showed not a speck of land under her jib-boom nearer than the South Natuna Island, a good week's sail distant. The plan was to make through Sirhassen Pass and keep well off the Palawan Passage route of steamers between Manila and Singapore.

Now Jessup lounged on a transom-seat of the main-cabin, stretched out with his feet aft toward the companionway to the quarter-deck, his back to the passage leading from the main deck forward.

A single gimbal-lamp on the bulkhead over him provided the light, and as the schooner heeled gently under the press of wind in her sails, the stars washed back and forth across the open skylight.

Supper was over and the last rattle of dishes had come from the galley in the passage. Kwan-po, the Chinese cook, had finished his work for the day. The sweet reek of opium came aft at times to Jessup's nostrils.

The missionary was aware of a movement in the passage. He gave the sound little heed, for it might be the steward-boy coming to the cabin with fresh water for the cabin-bottles, or mayhap the *serang* coming for *ubat*, or medicine, for an ailing man in the crew.

So that the first time Jessup heard the soft tread of a foot he did not turn his head to see who was coming. But the second time he heard it—and he knew now it was inside the main-cabin—he turned his head and looked over his shoulder.

What he saw surprized him so that he was incapable of making any sound. His eyes met something that was so far beyond his expectations, so utterly undreamed of as to be absurd, that he could only gasp. For what he saw within two feet of his head was the shining circle of the muzzle of a revolver.

"Keep quiet," said a low-toned voice. "Don't move your hands, or I'll drill."

Jessup let his eyes wander from the muzzle of the revolver up its slanting barrel to a sunburned hand; then up a brown and bare arm to the sleeveless cotton shirt of a man; on to a hairy neck and a face covered with sweat-grimed brown stubble of beard. There was a pair of narrowed eyes that glistened feverishly in the light of the gimbal-lamp.

Jessup's gaze did not go beyond those eyes; they were fixed with the hypnotic stare of a snake, swimming in a sweat that oozed out at the corners and ran down into the beard. They revealed a desperation so unlimited in its danger that there was actually something bland-like and soothing in their glitter. They held Jessup's eyes and burned like the steady flame of a candle which is protected from moving air by a perfectly transparent enclosing cylinder.

"If you call for help," went on that even and unruffled voice, "you'll die where you sit, Parson."

Jessup's eyes held on as long as they could. Then his gaze wavered, and he saw in the dimmer light behind that man with the revolver, another figure. This second man hung idly against the corner of the bulkhead to the forward passage, and was half turned so as to command a view into the passage.

This other man held something in his hand which made a flash of white light every time the schooner took a roll to starboard and the lamp spilled its illumination to that side. It was a couple of minutes before Jessup realized that the flash was from the blade of a knife.

Braced against the casing of the door into the passage that man lounged in a seemingly careless attitude.

Yet on closer examination Jessup saw that the poise of this other intruder had that alertness found in a panther ready to spring upon unsuspecting prey.

Jessup turned his gaze back on the man with the revolver.

"You—you're the sailor—who was sick," he breathed.

Wade nodded.

"I'm the man. But I'm not sick, so don't make that mistake about me now. In fact, I never was sick, and I'm in fine fettle for anything like a fight."

"You—you didn't strike me as being very sick yesterday," said Jessup.

Wade ignored the remark. Instead, speaking through lips only barely apart, he said—

"Strip him of his guns."

Doxey sprang aft. From each hip pocket of the missionary there came a revolver, and from a pouch up under the sleeve of his jacket, strapped to his forearm, a handy little automatic.

"For a praying man, you're a good deal of a gunner," remarked Wade as he took the automatic from Doxey.

"I was ashore yesterday and we had native boats alongside this morning. Simply neglected to put my weapons away."

"You shoot natives to save their souls, eh?" grinned Wade.

"I must insure my own protection when dealing with savages who can not be trusted," said the missionary. "And I see now that white men can not be trusted. But how did you get aboard?"

"That makes no difference now," said Wade. "What I want you to understand is that I've a lot of trouble wrapped up in these guns. If I turn that trouble loose, it's your fault. We're not here for the fun of the thing. We're ready to kill, you or anybody else."

"I—I suppose so," faltered Jessup, helplessly. "But there's no necessity to kill anybody, my dear sir. Pray, what can I do to serve you?"

"Everything I tell you to do, and keep your voice low. I know now you're playing for time, and hoping to attract the attention of the mate to what's going on. We don't care how soon the mate finds out; the sooner he does, the sooner he gets winged. But before we shoot him, if we have to, we'll finish you."

"Please don't do anything to disturb my wife," pleaded Jessup in a whisper. "She's not at all well, though she's up and around during the day. Any excitement'll be the end of her. Let me and the mate do your bidding without giving her any alarm. Your every wish will be obeyed, if you will spare my wife terror or distress. Surely, you wouldn't cause the death of a woman, when I'm willing to comply with any wish you make?"

Doxey had returned to his station at the end of the passage, and was examining the revolvers he had taken from Jessup, but keeping close watch on both passage and the companionway up to the quarter-deck.

"Where is your wife?" asked Wade.

"She's in there, asleep. At least, she was asleep when I came out here to read."

Jessup pointed to the door farthest aft on the starboard side, a cabin-door close to the bulkhead that ran athwartships as far as the companionway. That cabin, Wade knew, would extend aft under the quarter-deck, following the round of the schooner's stern.

Wade's eyes now roved over the fittings of the main-cabin, noting the racks with the water bottles, the shelves with slats holding rows of books in place, the drawers under the transom-seats, and the religious chromos set into the paneling between the doors of the sleeping-cabins. These highly colored pictures were scenes from Bible history which now seemed strangely out of place where one man held a gun at a preacher's head, and the other man stood with a revolver in each hand ready to kill anybody who entered the cabin.

There was a rifle-rack built against the round of the mizzenmast, which came down through the roof of the cabin and passed through the deck to its stepping somewhere below. The muzzles of the six rifles were held in place by semi-circular brass bands which had padlocks at their ends.

Wade glanced up through the open skylight, as if expecting to see somebody peering down. He observed that the cabin-table swung up out of the way. Pineapples and bananas hung from the frame of the skylight, and the cabin reeked with sweet odors of mangoes and other fruits of Andrus, lying about in the corners in native baskets.

"You'd better get a drink, and slip me a bottle, while we're having things so quiet," Wade suggested to Doxey.

The latter sprang to the rack and, passing a bottle to Wade, covered the missionary while Wade drained the bottle. Then Doxey drank.

"Might I ask what your intentions are with us and the schooner?" asked Jessup.

"Remains to be seen; dependent on how you perform. If there's any show of fight from afterguard or crew, we'll kill the lot of you."

"For piracy," suggested Jessup, "it seems to me that a missionary schooner offers mighty poor pickings."

"We'll be satisfied," said Wade.

"We have little of value on board. In fact, we carry on our work of salvation among the natives with barely enough income to cover our simplest needs. Most of the time I am in dire poverty."

"We're not out for loot," said Wade.

"Then put away your weapons," said Jessup. "I'll inform the mate that you two gentlemen are to be our guests to the next port. From what you said yesterday, I presume that's all you want."

"We'll pick our own port," said Wade. "If you don't make trouble for us, we'll drop you ashore on some island off the steamer track and where traders never go, leave you with supplies and shelter, and as many of the crew as we can spare. We'll slip away for some port, skip this schooner and leave word of where you are for the coast-guard people."

"I gather that the real purpose behind all this is to escape the authorities; that you are wanted for some crime in the past."

"You've guessed it, Parson. You wouldn't take us, so we had to take you. Make no mistake about it; we're not afraid to kill. What we're wanted for is serious enough so that one killing more or less means nothing to us."

"Dear me!" said Jessup sadly. "It is a pity to see white men acting like savages. I am convinced that there is nothing to be done; I am content to let you have your own way. But I pray you refrain from bloodshed."

"We're first-class refrainers, Parson. Glad you know how things stand with us, and I've a suspicion that you already know one of us. Maybe you know us both, eh?"

He leaned forward over his revolver and peered into Jessup's face.

"No, I don't know either of you," said the missionary. "Why do you think I do?"

"You were suspicious yesterday in the hut; looked me over pretty close while you prayed."

"Ah, yes. True; I saw that you were shamming sickness, and sought to divine your purpose. I felt sure your partner was lying when he came to the village for me. And, now, of course, it's apparent that you are not the common seamen you pretended to be."

"Why didn't you come back for us and take us along in the schooner?"

"In the first place I have strict orders from the authorities not to pick up beachcombers, or any other white men, off these islands that I visit in my work."

"That's not your only reason for not wanting us aboard."

"True. I was, to put it frankly, afraid of you both. And when I returned to the native village I inquired from certain of the natives. They admitted that you had been on Andrus longer than you had represented to me; also, that you always hid away from any vessel that came into the bay, and especially avoided a coast-guard cutter if she put in."

"Then you knew we were wanted by the police."

"What other conclusion could I arrive at? It was none of my affair. I am not performing police duties with this vessel."

"All right," said Wade. "No hard feelings, Parson. But let's get down to cases. The mate's on watch; probably listening to us. If he starts anything, you'll be dead before it's finished. Now then, hand over the key to the rifle-rack, all your keys."

Jessup fumbled through his pockets and brought out a bunch of keys which he handed over.

"The little brass one fits the padlocks on the gun-rack," he explained.

Doxey came forward. At a warning gesture from Wade, he remained standing in the center of the cabin. They listened for a couple of minutes. They heard nothing but the snoring of the schooner through the water, the creak of her rigging under wind pressure, the wash of the seas along her counter and the creaking of the vessel's woodwork when she heeled gently.

"Now," said Wade to Jessup, "step into the companionway and stop on the first step. Call the mate below. Let him come down to you, and then tell him what's happened. Warn him not to try and go back to the quarter-deck. If he runs up when we tell him to come into the cabin, we'll blow a hole through your back."

"I understand," said Jessup.

He got to his feet and walked aft to the companionway.

X

‘MR. LANGTON!" called Jessup up through the companion to the quarter-deck. "Oh, Mister Langton! Will you kindly come below for a minute?"

There was a reply; from well aft it sounded to Wade and Doxey. Presently the slippered feet of the mate came down the steps, just as the helmsman struck a tinkling eight bells.

"What's up?" came the voice of Langton from the scuttle.

"Come on down," pressed Jessup.

The mate's feet descended. Wade and Doxey, standing at each side of the companion, had Jessup between them, but just in between the bulkheads. Their revolvers were pressed into the missionary's silk-coated back.

"Stop where you are," said Jessup. "I've something most important to say—please listen carefully—and do exactly as I say."

"Why, what——?"

"Mr. Langton," broke in Jessup, "there are two white men down here in the cabin behind me, armed men, ready to end my life unless everything goes right, so——"

"Armed men!" gasped Langton. "Is this a joke?"

"There are a pair of revolvers against my back," pleaded Jessup. "For heaven's sake, don't make trouble, or my wife'll die of fright. Please stand just where you are. I've told these two men we'll make no resistance, so do nothing, I pray you, to endanger Mrs. Jessup."

The mate was silent for a couple of minutes, apparently turning over in his mind the amazing situation which Jessup had revealed to him. Wade, peering over Jessup's shoulder, could not detect anything in the nature of a signal passed between Jessup and the mate. And the missionary kept his hands at his sides, so there was no chance for the mate to pass a weapon.

"What shall I do now?" asked Jessup, turning his head back to Wade.

"Come out of the companion. Stand on the starboard side, facing away from me."

Jessup backed out of the companion, moved between Doxey and the bulkhead and stood facing the door of the cabin in which he had said his wife was sleeping. Doxey held him covered.

"Come in, Mr. Mate, and don't start anything," ordered Wade.

Langton's feet slipped down the remaining steps. Then he stepped clear of the companion, turning his head from right to left, peering about the main-cabin, his eyes not yet accustomed to the light.

He was a man of middle age and medium height. He wore pongee silk trousers that were overlarge. His white shirt lacked a collar. His face was red from sunburn and his sandy hair was cropped close to his scalp, making his ears look extremely large. He wore a cotton watch-cap that fitted on the crown of his head like something stuck on with glue, suggesting the shaven poll of a friar.

"This is a nice go!" he declared, squinting at Wade after he had seen Doxey with his gun pointed at Jessup.

"Suits us," snapped Wade. "Just turn around, with your hands well up, and let me see how you are for guns."

"What is this? Piracy?"

"Nothing else. We don't intend to pass ourselves off with any false pretenses. Piracy up to the hilt, Mr. Mate."

"Where'd you come from?"

"From Andrus Island, if it does you any good to know. Now, just turn."

Langton lifted his arms over his head and swung round. Wade extracted from his pockets two automatics and made sure that no other weapons were concealed.

"You go loaded for bear, like the parson," said Wade as he pocketed the guns. "Just keep in mind that we're not the only white men who came aboard at Andrus. There are others within call."

"Well, I'll be ——!"

"Please guard your language, Mr. Langton," broke in Jessup. "These gentlemen have promised no harm to us if we do their bidding, and I don't want my wife alarmed. Nothing can be done now. We are in the hands of desperate men."

Langton turned and faced Wade once

more. The mate seemed astounded and somewhat puzzled.

"Does Mrs. Jessup know about it yet?" he asked.

"She is asleep," said Jessup. "Please be careful, Mr. Langton! I order you to obey every command of these men. It is our only chance for life."

Langton muttered assurance that he would not cause any trouble.

"If you're satisfied, Parson, I am," he said. And to Wade, "Couldn't you find anybody to play pirate on but Salvation Jessup? Strikes me as a pretty mean piece of work to pick on a parson!"

"I don't care anything about your opinions. If the parson and you behave yourselves, we won't injure anybody, and he'll get his schooner back when we're done with it."

"You're awful sweet about it!" jeered Langton.

"Which is your cabin?"

Langton pointed to the middle door on the starboard side, the door next to the cabin Jessup had indicated as belonging to his wife.

"Then slip into your cabin out of the way. And make it snappy," said Wade. "We can't waste any time, and I've got to attend to a lot of things."

"Please do just as he says," pleaded Jessup.

The mate looked about him once more, peering first at Doxey and then at Wade once more. With a sniff of disgust, Langton walked forward in the cabin, opened the center door and disappeared, slamming the door after him. Doxey went to the door and dropped the batten-bar into the slots on each side, so that the door could not be opened outward again unless the bar was taken off.

"That settles *him!*" said Wade. "Now, Parson, you can sit down on this after-transom and be good while I tell you what we want done."

"I'm a man of peace," said Jessup as he dropped on the cushions.

"You're a man of peace, all right, but you'd like a squad of soldiers or police just now to save you from us. But I noticed that you packed your peace around in your hip pockets."

"That was only against savages," said Jessup.

Wade grinned.

"I appreciate the compliment. But I know your kind. You spend your lives talking peace, but when there's fighting to be done, you farm it out to somebody else. You missionaries preach peace with a couple of gunboats at your backs!"

Jessup disregarded Wade's comments and leaned back in his seat.

"Call the cook and have some supper laid. Be sure you don't give any signals or show that we're unwelcome guests. Cookie might as well understand that we're to be regular boarders. And remember: You'll have to eat and drink some of everything that's brought for us, so don't let him poison us."

"He may be ill-tempered if he has to go to work at this hour of the evening, so don't blame me on that account," said Jessup.

"I'll take the temper out of him if he acts up," said Wade. "Let down the table, so we can eat in style," he told Doxey. "I think some coffee will do us good; haven't had a good cup of coffee since the Year One, and some real honest biscuits. We've had fruit enough to last us a lifetime."

Doxey swung down the table, and they sat on a transom-seat beside it, so one could move aft and the other forward, both facing the starboard side. Jessup was within six feet of Wade, who kept the revolver on the missionary.

"Call the cook," commanded Wade.

"Oh, Kwan-po!"

There was no reply from the region of the cook's quarters down the forward passage. But instead, from the after cabin on the starboard side there came a startled call in a woman's voice.

"What is it, George?"

The voice came clearly through the little ventilating holes bored in the woodwork over the door and covered with tiny screens to keep out insects.

"That's my wife," whispered Jessup. "I'd better speak to her and keep her quiet."

Wade nodded assent.

"Everything's all right, my dear," called Jessup. "Go back to sleep; don't lose your rest."

"I can't sleep," came an irritable whine. "I want to go out on deck."

There were sounds of movement inside the cabin, as if somebody was hunting through drawers for clothing.

"Better turn down the lamp," whispered Jessup. "Then if she comes out to go on deck, she may not see you. I'll help her up the companion——"

"Oh, no, you won't," said Wade in a low tone. "You see her into the companion, but let her go up alone."

"She'll be terrorized—if she sees you with weapons."

"Let her terrorize; we'll let the light low, however, so we'll have a chance to eat our supper with a little peace."

Doxey reached up and turned the wick of the gimbal-lamp low. Now the main-cabin was in less than a half light, with objects distinct enough, but not clearly defined.

"I don't want your wife to come out at all," whispered Wade. "You open the door and tell her she's not to leave her cabin, and see that you don't bolt through the door yourself. When we've settled things to our own fancy we'll let you go to the cabin—and stay."

Jessup got to his feet and started for the door of his wife's cabin. Wade and Doxey followed him.

The door swung open inward, and a woman in a white skirt and wearing a light shawl wrapped about her head, appeared in the doorway. She was seen dimly in the poor light of the after end of the cabin.

"Don't come on deck just now, dear," Jessup hastened to say. He moved to her and reached out his hands to gently thrust her back. "I'll tell you all——"

Wade saw a flash of fire. There was a thunderous report and the low-burning flame of the gimbal-lamp jumped to the explosion inside the confined space of the cabin.

XI

WADE saw that jet of flame from where Mrs. Jessup was standing, and saw it over the missionary's shoulder. And Wade fired at the spot where Jessup had been standing.

Yet Wade knew instantly by some queer intuition that he had missed Jessup. The missionary had jumped. The blast of fire crossed Wade's face and his neck and cheeks prickled as bits of burning powder were driven under the skin. And his eyes were blinded. Just to what extent, Wade could not tell for the moment; all he knew was that the tears came with pain and the membranes of his lids seemed scorched by the heat and gas and smoke driven against them.

In that up-flare of the lamp he had seen a revolver thrust over Jessup's shoulder, and behind it the shawl-shrouded face which an instant before Wade had supposed to be the wife of the missionary.

Doxey fired once; and then a body fell. Wade could not tell whether it was Jessup falling over something, or whether it was Doxey dropping under that fire from the cabin door. Wade opened his eyes with an effort, but they closed under a spasm of pain.

"That woman!" he screamed. "The mate in woman's togs!"

He whirled as he called the warning to Doxey, and threw his back against the starboard bulkhead, afraid to fire with his eyes shut for fear he'd hit Doxey.

Two more shots blasted through that doorway. Wade got his eyes open, seeking a sight of Jessup, or a chance to put a bullet into the tricky mate who had evidently passed through a door from his own cabin into the one occupied by Mrs. Jessup, and dressed himself to play the woman coming out.

Wade could see little. His eyes were blurred by their own streaming tears. The place was full of thick smoke, the gimbal-lamp visible only as a yellowish spot like a vague sun seen through a blanketing fog.

Now he caught a glimpse of a white triangle on the port side and knew it for Jessup's shirt front. Wade fired twice and dodged. The shots illumined the place for the wink of an eye, showed Doxey crouched on the deck, one hand thrust forward with a revolver. He leaped past Wade in the flash of the latter's gun.

There was the crash of a body against paneling; the grunt of a man striking a blow, followed by the crash of a falling body inside the cabin door where had stood the disguised mate. Then came a yelping cry such as a dog might give in pained surprize when his tail is trodden upon. The long-drawn yelp turned to a peculiar whining.

"I—got—him—low—with—the—knife!"

The panting words came from Doxey, who seemed himself in pain.

"Are you hurt?" cried Wade.

"Hit—first shot of——"

The strained voice of Doxey died away

in the confusion of a series of scraping sounds along the door-coaming. There were sounds of scuffling.

Wade disregarded all this, content that the mate had been stabbed. It was evident that Doxey was seriously wounded, though the noises told of a desperate struggle.

"Both done for!" breathed Wade and turned his thoughts toward doing something on his own account.

Now that Doxey was out of the way, the duel with Jessup could be resumed. In the few seconds of time that had elapsed since Doxey shot past him, Wade had been seeking again to locate Jessup for a snap shot. He had not gone up the companionway, Wade was sure, for against the bit of sky that appeared at intervals through the scuttle when the schooner's bows dropped between swells, Wade could see the outline of the brown and almost naked figure of the helmsman braced on the steps, peering down into the main-cabin, his teeth shining whitely through the murk of curling smoke that swirled upward.

The draft through the open skylight tucked the powder fumes up in crazy eddies, and once more the gimbal-lamp shed a muddied illumination over the pit of the main-cabin.

Wade was aware now of shouts and sounds of running bare feet out on deck. There came a confused babble of native voices. The door of the cabin where Langton had appeared and fired, began to clatter back against the bulkhead with each lift and fall of the schooner's stern.

"Where is that parson?" wondered Wade as he searched the dark corners of the main cabin

The missionary had probably slipped into one of the cabins on the port side, where he was arming himself, or waiting his chance to spring out with some sort of a club.

There was one thing lacking which puzzled Wade, intent as he was upon finishing Jessup: There had come no sounds of sobbing or screaming from the missionary's wife. It was to be expected that a woman, who had just called to her husband, would be demanding to know where he was after the sound of shots.

"She's probably fainted—or died of heart disease, just as the parson said she would."

With that, Wade dismissed the matter. He was more worried over the fact that both the mate and Doxey were silent. He wondered if he had to fight the whole schooner alone.

While the excited gabble went on on the quarter-deck, and black heads peered over the edge of the open skylight, Wade remained braced against the bulkhead, bent low, watching his chance for a shot.

"Where are you?" came Doxey's voice. And now Wade knew for sure that his companion was sorely stricken.

"I'm all right," said Wade, and held his revolver higher, expecting that Jessup would attack on hearing the voice.

A new sound came into the cabin; the patter of bare feet along the passage. Wade did not look in that direction, for he did not dare take any chance of missing Jessup, but turned his head a trifle more forward so that the tail of his eye would take in what came.

A figure appeared in the opening, and leaped at the gimbal-lamp. The wick shot up and the swaying flame revealed a Chinese, stripped to the waist. His eyes peered into the farthest corners of the cabin as he bent forward with startled gaze, still half asleep.

Jessup rose up from behind the end of a transom-seat and fired at Wade. It was a poor and ill-calculated shot. The bullet *whanged* into the woodwork and thudded dully against the panel of a door.

"The mate handed him that gun in the doorway," thought Wade.

He let fly two bullets. Jessup, just on his feet, lurched forward and fell on his face. But as he fell, he discharged his revolver without aim. Wade dropped, his feet sliding out from under him over the carpet. He felt the hot metal searing through his thigh. The toes of his left leg quivered as if they had been crushed, and the nerves of his leg seemed turned to incandescent wires, burning their way out of the flesh.

The Chinese came hurtling through the air. Wade lifted his revolver to bring the big fellow down, but did not press the trigger.

Wade had supposed the Chinese was attacking him; instead, to his amazement, Kwan-po leaped upon the prone figure of Jessup and rained a furious whirlwind of blows upon the missionary's head with both fists. Jessup groaned and struggled to protect himself, and the pair of them thrashed about on the carpet, the cook uttering little squeals of rage as he clawed Jessup.

"That fool Chink mistook the parson for a stranger who had made the trouble," thought Wade.

So he held his revolver's muzzle up with a hand that was weakening, ready for a sure shot when the Chinese discovered his mistake and shifted his attack.

The lamp was burning now with a high flame that flooded the cabin with a yellow light. And other figures came pressing into the end of the passage to see what was happening; brown faces with staring eyes.

Wade turned his head as he heard some movement at the door where Doxey had disappeared. He saw something come creeping over the high brass-shod coaming. It was a hand, feeling for a grip on the edge of the coaming; then Doxey's face, twisted with pain and chalky in color about the eyes. His head lifted slowly from behind the coaming as his hands tried to pull him across the barrier and out into the main-cabin.

"I'm—I'm done for!" he croaked chokingly. "You——"

His head fell forward over the coaming and his fingers splayed out over the brass threshold. He coughed out a spatter of blood over his white hands, and he lay silent.

The Chinese cook had seized Jessup by the middle, and struggling to his feet, threw the missionary with crashing effect back upon the transom-seat. Jessup's head struck the boarding with a hollow sound, and the missionary crumpled up on the cushions, his legs sprawling out over the end of the seat and his arms swinging limply with each roll of the schooner.

The Chinese turned and glared back at the brown faces in the end of the passage. He waved his hands over his head and cackled something in Chinese in a shrill tone—scolding them, it seemed to Wade—for invading the sacred precincts of the cabin. But they paid no attention to him at all, continuing to stare in at Wade and chatter to one another.

Jessup rolled off the transom-seat, and lay motionless on the deck—dead.

At once there came a howl from the crew looking in. It was plainly a howl of satisfaction. Kwan-po turned and looked at the limp figure and broke out once more in his high-pitched screaming.

Twisting his loose queue about his neck, he turned toward the passage and called something. A brown man, lean to emaciation and wearing a breech-cloth and a red turban, clawed his way out of the sailors and leaped into the cabin. The brown fellow carried a belaying-pin in his hand.

Wade swung his revolver round to cover the man, who was certainly bent on mischief.

XII

"HAB got *serang!*" yelled Kwan-po to Wade. "You see! Boss fella, this! No shoots him!"

The *serang*, instead of making for Wade, dashed past the Chinese, grinning down at Wade as he passed. When he had come to the limp figure of Jessup, he picked up the missionary's feet, while Kwan-po took the shoulders, and they hustled the body out through the passage. The crew broke before them, and from the fore deck Wade could hear shrill cries of delight, and a splash overside!

Sudden understanding came to Wade. The ship's company were mad with delight that the missionary and his mate had been destroyed! Instead of being in danger of attack from the sailors, the *serang*, or the big Chinese cook, Wade was regarded as a man who had rescued them from tyrannical masters.

"Why, they were ripe for mutiny all the time, if we'd only known it!" he told himself. "That's why not a single man of 'em was allowed ashore at Andrus. Even the whale-boat was towed ashore by islanders. Not even one of Jessup's crew was allowed to go over the side with the dingey! Oh, if Parut had found that out, how easy it would have been! Instead of Doxey dead and my leg drilled with a bullet, we could have had the crew on our side! Rotten luck!"

Yet he felt lifted up with hope. If the crew were glad to be free of the missionary, certainly they would do anything Wade asked. He would have medicine, treatment, food, rest, time to let his wound heal, and then escape from the schooner in any place he desired.

The *serang* came bounding back through the passage, and the whole lot after him. The main-cabin became a bedlam. Kwan-po, in a frenzy of joy, danced about the cabin through the throng of brown-skinned seamen.

"Kwan-po! Whisky! *Ubat!* Look see!"

And when the frantic Chinese looked his way, Wade pointed to his blood-laved legs.

At once the Chinese quieted, and regarded Wade with sober mien.

"You got dead foot, eh!" he remarked in unfeigned surprize. "More better cook this pidgen."

He lifted Wade up on the transom-seat, and took the revolver from his fingers.

"You good fella," he pronounced. "You b'long this side; holy man come back proper, you see!"

Wade could make little of the meaning of the Chinese, beyond the fact that "cook" meant anything pertaining to care, and that the wound would be treated. Why the "holy man" was to come back was utterly meaningless jargon, not to be bothered about. The Chinese was more than half crazy, anyhow. He departed toward the galley, talking to himself in his own language.

To Wade's surprize, the *serang* and the sailors disregarded the cabin in which the mate and Doxey lay dead. They had merely peered in and made sure there was nothing that needed immediate attention there.

They were already battering at the after door on the port side; smashing it with capstan bars fetched from the bows, and careless as to the damage they did. The only thing that hampered the *serang* in his labors with the bar was the crowd that pressed about them. He had to drive them back in order to make each swing at the door with the bar.

"Bent on loot," decided Wade as he lay still on the seat. "Stuff stowed in that cabin they want; and when they get it, may finish me off. Good thing Kwan-po only got one gun. I can't trust these birds. I'm the only man that stands between them and their total possession of the schooner. But what the dickens has become of Jessup's wife?"

The cabin door splintered into wreckage, and Wade heard the muffled cries of a woman. Wade could not tell what she was saying; she seemed to be wailing in terror, and at the same time trying to urge somebody to action. And the voice seemed to come from below decks!

The *serang* yelped at the sailors. They drew back from him, and in a momentary glimpse which Wade had of the interior of that cabin, he saw the *serang* tugging at rings in the deck. It gave to his pulling, and a small hatch was lifted out and thrown into the main-cabin.

"*Kepala!* God bless you!"

It was the woman's voice from below, calling joyfully.

"*Aie, Kepala!*" shrilled the *serang*. Wade knew *Kepala* to be the word for headman, or chief, in the Malay tongue, a word evidently used as a name for the *serang*, or native bosun.

Then a man's voice!

"Lift her up, *Kepala*," and the next instant a frail little woman was pulled up through the hatch while the sailors shouted joyfully.

Kwan-po had brought a bottle and a glass, and was in the act of pouring out a drink for Wade. But the appearance of the woman was too much for the Chinese. He danced about in glee, the bottle in one hand and the glass in the other, spilling the liquor out.

The sailors made way for the woman. She was too weak to stand alone, and the *serang* helped her to the transom-seat on the port side across from Wade. She was pale and thin, her cheeks drawn with suffering. Her hair was loosely tumbled down her back damp and tangled. Her white skirt was stained and rumpled, and her thin silk waist clung tightly to her sweat-drenched shoulders. She lay back on the transom-seat, while Kwan-po, suddenly sane again, gave her a drink from the glass.

"May Heaven bless you, *Kepala!*" came a weak voice as a man was hauled up through the hatchway. "I knew you'd save us—if you had time, and——"

He wavered in the doorway, and then collapsed into the arms of the sailors about him. Kwan-po put the muzzle of the bottle to his lips and he coughed, and staggered to the seat beside the woman.

"Now who are these?" the amazed Wade asked himself.

The man was white-haired and of kindly face; red, now, with congestion, and smeared with dirt. He wore a waistcoat of some silken stuff, but his arms were bare. His collar had been torn away from his thin neck, and his white trousers looked as if he had recently been crawling through a plowed field after a rainstorm.

The *serang* drove the sailors up the companionway and out through the forward passage. They departed laughing and chattering gaily among themselves like children caught at harmless mischief.

Only the *serang*, Kwan-po, and a boy who seemed to be a cabin-steward, remained behind. And Kwan-po soon hustled the boy to the galley, where he could be heard clattering plates and opening tins with a meat-ax.

The man suddenly caught sight of Wade, and stared in puzzled wonder at the stranger. Then, chokingly, he asked:

"Who are you, pray? Have the coast guard cutters taken us?"

"I—I came aboard at Andrus Island with a friend of mine," said Wade. "He was killed in the fight, and I'm shot through the leg."

The old man gasped.

"Why—I don't understand! I—" He turned to the woman. "Emily, are you all right? There, you are going to be all right——"

The woman, in sudden horror, pointed to the after cabin on the starboard side.

"Dead men!" she groaned. "Somebody has been killed!"

"Yes," said Wade. "Salvation Jessup was killed and his mate. That's Doxey, the man who came with me."

The old man's jaw dropped, and he stared first at the *serang* and then at Kwanpo.

"Salvation Jessup dead!" he murmured. "Why, the poor man must be delirious! And no wonder!"

He got to his uncertain feet and moved across to peer down at Wade's face.

"I'm well enough, thanks," said Wade. "Not delirious—but ask Kwan-po, they threw Jessup's body overboard, if I'm not mistaken."

"You most certainly *must* be mistaken," said the old man. "For I am Salvation Jessup, and this woman is my wife."

"I—I don't understand!" said Wade helplessly. "We saw a woman in a sunbonnet on deck and Salvation Jessup went ashore at Andrus Island with an organ. He prayed and sang hymns to——"

Salvation Jessup nodded sadly.

"Of course. I was bound for Andrus when these two men came aboard me at an island just off Palawan's tail. They wanted passage to Andrus, saying they were left to study birds, and that their schooner had failed to come for them when due. I took them with me, being happy to help two gentlemen who were stranded on the island. They took possession of my schooner, killed four of my crew, put me and my wife down in an old potato-hold below and went on to Andrus Island. Knowing we were due there, they felt safer to pretend to be me and my wife. So one of the men dressed in my wife's clothes and was seen on deck. That's the only way I can account for the fact that you mistook them for us. But how could you fight to rescue us, if you supposed one of the men to be Salvation Jessup?"

"We stowed away," said Wade wearily. "And when they found us aboard there was a fight. But who are—were, these two men?"

"Two of a gang that looted a ship off the coast of Borneo. It was not until after they had captured my schooner that I remembered they fitted the descriptions on a police circular the government sent to me at Labuan, but I had not read it carefully. It never occurred to me that such men would molest me and mine, but it seems they saw in us an opportunity to escape from these waters by taking our schooner. What they intended to do with us, I have no way of knowing, but from some remarks they dropped, I presume we were to be put ashore on some lonely island. Now, praise to the Creator, we have been freed from our bondage and you have, my dear sir, brought us out of Egypt."

"They beat us to it!" murmured Wade, and a queer grin stole over his pain-strained face. "Parson, I wish my leg could be fixed up, and I need a little stimulant."

"You shall have all that the vessel provides, my dear sir," said Salvation Jessup. "And, while Kwan-po is attending to you, sir, we shall pray in thanks for our deliverance, and for your speedy recovery."

Four days later, the *Gospel Argonaut*, back in the bay at Andrus Island, was boarded by an officer from a coast-guard cutter. Wade was recognized, and, to the utter amazement of Salvation Jessup, arrested on a charge of murder three years back at Selangan.

"Such a pity," Salvation Jessup told the officer. "This man, performing an act of piracy, saved my wife and me, though he came aboard with the other unfortunate man with the purpose of submitting us to the same fate or destroying us. The mills of the gods grind slowly, truly, and good may come from evil!"

The Camp-Fire

A Meeting-place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

HOW to ride a horse—cowboy style versus the riding-school:

Watts, California.

I would like to join the comrades around the Camp-Fire. I want to say a few words about riding horses. I was interested and somewhat amused by the letter from Bill Gianella. So far as his experience with riding trotting horses is concerned, he is probably right with the exception of the cattle country.

I WAS practically raised on the range. If you want to get a good idea of how a cowboy rides his horse, refer to the *Adventure* cover design, May 20. "Don't sit in the saddle," says Bill. I'd like to see Bill attempt to ride an "uncocked" bronc with his feet in the stirrups on the balls of 'em. He wouldn't stay more than three jumps. A cowboy sits in the saddle, rather he slumps in the seat, with all muscles relaxed, even the shoulder muscles. He adapts his movements to that of the horse. He rides a trotting animal without bouncing up and down like the English or military short-stirrup motion. The way the cowboy rides is not easy on a horse but it is the easiest way there is, especially when riding in rough lava or hilly country. A cowman could not keep his feet in the stirrups riding after dodging cattle on the run, if he didn't shove them full home in the stirrups clear up to the heels of the boot. That is why—principally—the boot-heel is made so high on cowboy boots; to keep the foot from going through the stirrup. The modern stirrup is made of metal and gets so slick from usage that a foot could not be kept in place unless shoved home. Again, the stirrup is rounding on bottom and sides, is about two inches deep, and fits between the heel and sole, or the instep of the foot. The sole is very stiff and strong in the instep. The cowboy rides with full length stirrups, scarcely any space between seat and saddle.

"PUT your weight on to the stirrups," would cause the average cowboy to snort with disgust. Anytime any one does not believe a cowboy rides his saddle and not the stirrups, examine the saddle. He wouldn't stay put on a bronc in cutting or running cattle very long if he didn't. In the olden days of the time of the Mexican saddle the stirrups were ponderous wooden affairs, some of them as much as four inches deep, most of them with tapaderos to keep the feet from going through. Then the cowpuncher had to ride to some extent on the balls of his feet, but experience changed the depth time and again until the present narrow model which compels the boot to go through to the heel.

A cowman does not sit up in the saddle at any time; when he is using a rope, he stands in the stirrups at times and the rest of the time he sits, leaning forward, with his knees flexible and legs ready to grip the barrel of the animal. There are no better riders than the American cowboy, and they are the easiest riders on horses there are considering the manner of work the cow-horse is compelled to do. "Bill" must have been engaged in some riding school. Certainly he is correct in most of the things he says about riding outside of the range. The reason cowboys don't make "kidney sores" on their "cayuses" is because they change horses whenever a horse shows signs of fatigue; hence the "string" of horses allotted to each rider on the roundup.

THE reason range horses are broken by physical force is because it would take too long to use any other method. A horse isn't by any means broke, because he has been ridden two or three saddles (times) and he usually uncocks himself (bucks) a number of times after he has been assigned to a "string" of mounts. I have known old horses who have been ridden for years to do the same stunt every time they were saddled in the morning—to wit, buck a few jumps from habit, I guess. Some of the best broke horses I ever knew were cow-ponies, but it took time to accomplish this. Horses are rounded up, ridden two or three times and called broke for use for the average cowboy. Whoever gets one of these has to teach him all there is to the cow-pony business—bridlewise, ropewise, gunwise, knee-pressure.

Then comes the tricks a cowboy pulls off, such as picking objects from the ground at full run; a horse has to learn to balance himself against whatever stunt his rider may pull off. He has to learn to handle himself in the roughest sort of country and be able to overtake the swiftest horned animal of the cow family. He has to learn to stand when the reins are thrown on the ground just as though he were tied. He often comes at his rider's call or whistle. He will go till he drops; he will charge a maddened steer or cow, trusting to his rider to protect him—which he does in 99 out of 100 cases. I saw a magnificent horse killed by a steer because his rider wasn't on the lookout. The rider vowed to rope the steer and break his neck and he did that very thing. This happened at a rodeo at Globe, Ariz., a number of years ago.

Cow-horses are wonderful animals and never did come in for their share of praise. We hear a lot about blooded animals of different kinds, but they wouldn't be one-two-three with cow-horses at that sort of work. I have seen it tried out. Half-bloods put on the range; they lasted quick. They were fast, but they didn't have the endurance.

"Bill" says don't sit in the saddle. I wonder if he ever saw any Indians ride. They are among the best on earth and they don't use any saddles worthy the name; they sit on the horse on a piece of skin or blanket, and ride like they were a part of the animal. Bill wants to go down to Patagonia and take a few lessons from the guachos. Well, we all make mistakes; his letter is interesting, even if misleading in part.

Tapaderos are used in brushy country on the modern stirrup to keep the foot from being pushed out; some use them on the plains country for ornament. The heavy stock saddle is the easiest made, both on animal and man.—GEORGE C. BOYDEN.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Ralph R. Perry rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

Wish I hadn't been dragged out into the full light of the Camp-Fire this way, for now that I'm here I've very little to tell you boys, except "Howdy." I'm twenty-nine and single, and in my wandering around I've always stuck close to the cities—New York, New Orleans, Boston and San Francisco. Play tennis and sail a catboat (do both badly) and would rather cut the wood than go fishing in camp. Unless bass are really biting, and there's nothing to burn but hemlock. Lost my sunny disposition completely trying to split hemlock, and sitting in a boat bass-fishing after the sun got high. I claimed they never bite after seven in the morning and before five in the afternoon, but let's not start an argument.

It seems to me a chap who tries to write of the sea ought to explain carefully where he put in his time, for ships and gear vary. During the war I had about a year on the subchasers, and another on the *U. S. S. Antigone*, doing ferry duty then between Norfolk and St. Nazaire. So all I know first-hand is the Western Ocean. I hear some old shipmates grumbling, "And darn little of that." It's a fact.

Both ships were lucky while I was aboard. In the chasers, a squadron mate was cut down by a tanker, the boat behind us once had a lookout thrown from the top of the chart-house during a blow, and lost. So did we, but our man hit a back stay, and fell inboard safely. On the *Antigone* we thought we were going to hit a mine once, and discovered it was only a buoy. Nothing much to yarn about during a gangway watch in port, when you try to string out a story that will last from midnight till four A.M. So let me say "Howdy" again. And if Al Rader is here tonight, I wish he'd drop me a line.—RALPH R. PERRY.

THE best man to answer these questions on wolves and dogs would be Larry Trimble, who educated Strongheart. Many millions of people know Strongheart but comparatively few of them know that Mr. Trimble has for years been working to produce the perfect sled-dog. That's a bigger thing than it may seem to those who don't realize that the dog is the North's chief means of transportation and that the war's demand for dogs pretty well thinned out the best dog-team stock.

His theory, later backed up by science's investigations into the history of the dog, was that the German (or Rumanian, Czechoslovakian, etc.) shepherd or "police" dog and the malemuit are the only surviving strains of pure original dog and that one strain worked west from Asia into Europe, the other east across Bering Straits into America. Having circled the earth between them, the two strains have met in North America. Mr. Trimble believed that the perfect sled-dog could be created through crossing these two original strains and has for several years been putting his belief into practise with gratifying success. My own personal observation is limited to one specimen, a cross between a Mackenzie River husky and a German shepherd—only a year old, 26 inches high at the shoulder, weighing probably 125 to 150 pounds, highly intelligent, thoroughly good-natured and strong enough to feel like a horse on the other end of your leash. To describe him briefly, some dog, Producing a new and really superior breed of dog isn't done in a minute, but Mr. Trimble has already begun getting the results he dreamed of—almost a perfect realization of his rosiest dreams.

He's also made extensive experiments in crossing timber wolves with various breeds of dogs but, I understand, finds most of the results unsatisfactory for his purpose.

Luray, Virginia.

Will readers of *Adventure* who know something about the breeding of dogs in the North tell us facts in regard to crossing the wolf and dog?

I HAVE often read stories in which the writer claims the dog is a descendant of the wolf. Again I have read that the young from the wolf-dog cross would be "mules" and would not produce young. I asked the editor of the question and answer column in the *American Field* for information on the subject a year or so ago and he replied that the young from the cross of wolf and dog were "mules" and would not breed, and that authorities were giving up the theory that the dog descended from the wolf.

Now comes Maurice M. Norsden at Camp-Fire and says the malemiut was evidently a cross between either a true wolf (or the Esquimaux dog) and our domestic dog. I saw somewhere that the wolf will not mate again after losing his mate. Who is right?—A. SOUDER, D. C.

THIS goes back to a story in the last March 10 issue. Mr. Rowland, the author, on seeing his tale in print noticed a phrase that led him to forestall possible critics. So far as I remember, none arose, but his letter is interesting and it's just as well to be dead sure of facts anyhow.

Darien, Conn.

In my story in the March 10th issue I notice the phrase: "Next the main and mizzen sails began to thrash." I can not help wondering whether any captious critic has risen to proclaim that no sailor would call the aftermost sail of a three-masted schooner the mizzen? With certain qualifications the point would be well taken, and it raises some other points which may be of interest to *Adventure's* readers.

IN THE development of the fore-and-aft rig beyond the original two masts the custom has been to keep the aftermost sail the largest. At least, that has been the case in this country and Canada. With this preeminence in size has gone the name "spanker." The spanker boom, projecting out over the vessel's stern, is longer than any of the others, and the sail is, of course, proportionately larger. As a result, perhaps, of this being a "spanking big sail" the name became firmly fixed in custom. Ask any coasterman what he calls the sails of a three-master and he will reply: "Foresail, mainsail, and spanker." On a four-master it is: Foresail, mainsail, mizzen and spanker.

When one gets into a still greater multiplicity of masts custom varies somewhat, but the orthodox names in the case of a six-master are fore, main, mizzen, spanker, jigger, driver. It is said that the aftermost sail of the great seven-masted *Thomas W. Lawson* was dubbed the *pusher*—a name at once picturesque and highly descriptive. Stories are told also of masters who named the masts after the days of the week and of others who fell back in despair upon the simpler expedient of numbering them, apparently on the theory that everybody can count whereas many of the "dummies" who ship before the mast nowadays are incapable of remembering anything so intricate as a set of six names. From my own experience I can easily accept that explanation!

THE point of all this is, of course, that in no case does the name "mizzen" occur attached to the aftermost sail. How then can I justify my own use of it in that sense? My defense rests on the fact that from time immemorial the three masts of a ship have been known as fore-, main-, and mizzen-mast. These terms have become so firmly fixed in our speech as to be part of our common knowledge. Indeed Webster's Dictionary bluntly declares that the mizzen is the "aftermost of the fore-and-aft sails of a three-masted vessel," and gives "spanker" as an alternate designation. The authority who wrote this definition was not a coasterman—we may be sure of that—but when an author is faced with the question of using a term which is univerally understood or one which is colloquially correct he must often choose the former. His business, after all, is to get the idea across to the reader; and this inevitably constrains his use of language. If a sea story were written from start to finish in nautical lingo it would be as unintelligible to the average reader as some reports of ball-games. This is something which the technically minded critic will do well to remember.

MY OWN interest in a sea story lies more with the ship than with her people. Frankly, I care more for working my vessel off a lee shore than I do for what happens to the hero. This is a confession—but it is one with which I believe many readers of *Adventure* will sympathize. Even so, I have to remember that seamanship is a highly technical subject. Even the editors garble it sometimes (!) In one of my stories (*not* in *Adventure*) I used the expression: "Trim the fore-sheet." Great was my mortification when this appeared in print as "The trim fore-sheet." Perhaps it is experiences such as this that lead sea-story writers more and more to use their ships merely as a stage setting. It seems a pity, for something very real will have been lost when the wind-jammer has passed out of literature for good and all. Meanwhile let me remind you of a notice which used to figure prominently in certain dance halls in the old West: "Don't shoot the man at the Piano; he's doing the Best he Can!"—JOHN T. ROWLAND.

THIS old-timer comrade seems to think his letter is too long. I can't agree with him. Here's hoping he talks to us again.

As to the Johnson County War, well, the bitterness was so great that reports from the participators on either side have to be weighed very carefully.

Anchorage, Alaska.

I am an old reader of *Adventure* for the reason that all the stories are so logical of the life that is, and used to be, followed by the people of the localities in which the plots are laid. The stories of the people who lived in the West 35 and 40 years ago are the ones that interest me the most, for I was raised among them and knew the characters, or most of them, at the time I was in the country in which they lived and operated.

THE stories and plots of the men who lived in Wyoming are especially interesting to me for the reason that is the country in which I was raised and grew to manhood. I lived there from 1884 until 1908. When I first went there it was nothing but a stock country, and each and every stock man and cattle company owned and controlled a domain larger than a county, and their cattle ranged the land for as great a distance, two hundred miles sometimes. I have wrangled horses and ridden the range from the Utah line on the west to the Powder River on the east of the Big Horn Mountains; and on my own hook, with my saddle horse, a Winchester rifle and a pack-horse along, have ranged the whole country of Wyoming from the Sweetwater and Pumpkin Buttes on the south to the Yellowstone River on the north, and from the Jackson Hole country, the heads of the Wind River, Wood River, Gray Bull, Stinking-water, to the Black Hills in Dakota, and visited nearly every old fort and cantonment that troops had ever occupied. Have seen the remnants of old Ft. Phil Kearney, which the Indians burned to the ground after the troops had been ordered to leave by old Red Cloud, commander of the Sioux, who a short time prior to that massacred 83 soldiers that had gone out with a wood train as guards. I saw and talked with one of the teamsters, old Sam Stringer, 80 years old at the time that I saw him. The bodies were all frozen when they got to them, so they loaded them on and piled them up like cordwood on the wagons and brought them in.

I HAVE been over the old Custer Massacre ground, and the full length of the Bozeman trail from the Platte River on the south to the Yellowstone River on the north, and have seen old graves, rifle-pits and remnants of burnt wagons, ox-bows, rifle-barrels and all the odds and ends that went to make up their equipment. Such scenes would cause me to conjure up in my mind phantoms of desperate battles, of joys that would spring in their breasts as they would vision the piles of gold they would find at the end of their journey in Alder Gulch, Mont.

BUT to return to my time in the country, as I said once before, I think I either knew personally or by hearsay all of them that were famous at that time, both notorious bad men, and the noted peace officers of that period, such as Frank Canton, a stock association man that had to leave the country several years later on account of the Johnson County War; Tom Horn another association man, and later hung in Cheyenne for murdering the Nickolas boy; then there was T. Jeff Carr, U. S. Marshall, Vergil Rice of the Big Horn country, a fine clean man but died later on from the con. He was the sheriff of that county. Then there was Johnny Dee, another sheriff of the same county; Felix Austin, another one, and a good one; Tom Smith of Johnson County and many more that I have forgotten. But the king of all of them was John Owens of New Castle, Wyo. None of the gun-men or killers wanted anything to do with him—I mean those that knew him, for he was sure a go-gitter and they all looked alike to him when he wanted them. He was a scout, guide and an officer for 35 or 40 years and, barring Wild Bill, was the fastest pistol shot in the West. Now that is saying a whole lot when there were so many of them that were wonders with a gun, but any of the old-timers know it to be fact. He had a fine personal appearance and was as gentle spoken as a Lord Chesterfield and of a very lovable disposition, but lord help those that seriously crossed him or broke the law in his territory. I could mention wild bunches that he has cleaned out single-handed. Some times he had to kill some.

THEN there were the outlaws that I have known and who afterward were killed or left the country. Some served prison sentences and afterward became good citizens and a credit to their community. There was Tom O'Day, the Curry Bros., Dab Burch, Pistol Billy, Gotch, Geo. (Buck) Cassidy, Mexican Pete, Bob McCoy, and a lot of others that I can't call to mind at present. But those were the days of adventure and romance. A long rope and a running-iron with a good horse were all that some of the waddies needed to become cattlemen. It will be years and years before the stories will be all written of the romances and adventures and deeds of courage and tales of suffering that have taken place within the bounds of Wyoming. I think it is the richest field of the West for the fiction writer and also for the historian. The great main trail to the Pacific Coast lay through its borders as well as the Bridger and Bozeman trail that left it on the Powder River divide, one to the east of the Big Horn Mountains and the other to the west and through the Big Horn Basin. Both headed for Bitter Root, and the gold-fields of Montana.

It has always seemed to me that the stories in *Adventure* which I have read have more truly depicted the old life of the West than any other magazine on the market, and I have read all of them. Sometimes they would be wrong in their geography and topography of that particular section of the country, but that is to be expected sometimes if one doesn't live in the country or hasn't been in it. But as a general thing they are pretty correct.

I HAPPENED to be reading "Camp-Fire" and ran across a letter from F. W. Conness of Chicago, touching on the Bechdolt article, "Last of the Open Ranges." He compliments the author on his story as being facts, but on the other hand wishes to correct a few mistakes in his story. What the story is I do not know, nor the names of some of his characters that were used in it, but I do know this, that the killings Mr. Conness mentions are correct. One of the men's names was Nate Champion and his finish was the way that it is described. But the other man's name, the way I had always heard it called at that time, was Nick Ray, and not Ned as Mr. Conness says it was. And another thing Mr. Conness is mistaken about is the name of the man on the load of hay. His name was Jack Flag, a man known all over that country, and I knew him well myself. The last time I saw him was in 1904 in Buffalo, Wyo., where he was living at that time. At different times he had punched cows, ranched and run a newspaper while he was living there. He was a man that was well educated and came into the country from the south. I think from Texas, but am not sure.

Now another thing that he mentions is in regards to where the fight of the raiders and settlers was held. Mr. Conness says it was at the H-Bar-H Ranch. He is wrong again; the fight took place at the old disbanded, or deserted, TA Ranch on Crazy Woman Creek. Another correction: the trials of the invaders were to take place in Buffalo, Wyoming, but the stockmen got a change of venue to Cheyenne, where it was thrown out of court, which was to be expected—as that place was the stronghold of the stockmen and the headquarters of their association.

THE stockmen's raid was concocted and hatched in Cheyenne, and Frank Canton was put in charge of operations.

In a few days Canton and his men left for Casper at the end of the railroad, where they and their outfit of horses and wagons disembarked for the trail north and into the country of the nesters. After killing Nate Champion and Nick Ray, the country become aroused and the nesters and their friends prepared for war and it was but a very short time until the hills commenced to vomit forth armed and grim-faced men bound for Buffalo, where they had determined to congregate and perfect their plans for driving out the invaders. After a sufficient number of them had got together, Red Angus, the sheriff, led the bunch south to hunt them out and either arrest the bunch or make coyote bait out of their carcasses. Well, to cut their operations short, Red Angus and his men laid siege to the association men at the TA Ranch, which lasted for about three days. The house had been built in the old Indian days out of heavy logs and on an open flat to repel any attack by the redskins, so Red Angus' men, finding that they couldn't take it, took hind running-gears of two wagons and with logs made a movable fort that would protect about twenty-five men behind it. They got some dynamite to blow up the building when they got close enough to do so.

WELL, they had just got well on their way when they happened to look off to the north and saw a band of men coming with their horses on the run and when they got close enough it was found they were soldiers from Ft. McKinney on Clear Creek, just above Buffalo, and not Ft. Russell, which was three hundred miles to the south of there. Of course that settled the fighting part right there and then when the troops took charge of the operations and the beleaguered association men all at the same time.

Afterward the nesters and little ranchmen wondered how it happened that about the time the celebration was to take place the soldiers should come down on them the way they did, so they commenced to make inquiries and soon learned that some of the cattlemen's friends had seen the fight going on and, knowing that they had no chance to get away, had burnt the trail for the telegraph office at Buffalo and, after arriving there, had finally got in communication with the head men at Cheyenne. They in turn had burnt the wires to Omaha, Neb., in order to get in touch with the commander of the Western Army Department, notifying him of the condition of affairs and for him to communicate at once with the commander of the soldiers at Ft. McKinney and to get them into action or the stuff was all off with their two-gun, dead-shot exterminaters that had been imported at great expense to purge the territory of those undesirable ex-waddies, old cowpunchers, who had dared to settle on government land and try to make a living for themselves instead of having to throw a long rope for the Co's.

THEREFORE that was the reason of the timely appearance of Uncle Sam's boys who saved this noble band from destruction. And the timely appearance of the soldiers was the result of early preparedness on the cowmen's part. The men who concocted the raiders' movements knew the traits of most of those northern-Johnson County intended victims, and knew that, when once aroused, they were fighting fools and slung a bad gun when in action, and if banded together in sufficient numbers were liable to clean up on their imported fighters, and if they did that, it would be a very costly affair to them in more ways than one. First they had about fifty men and each man was paid $5 per day and for every nester or rustler they killed they were to receive $500, and in case they were killed, their families, or dependents, had to be paid from $1,000 to being supported in some cases. So, knowing all these things and being obligated to make good, it stood them in hand to use all preventive measures possible to avoid that kind of a calamity before it took place.

Therefore they, the cattlemen, either through correspondence or personal interview, got into action with the commander of the Rocky Mountain Department of the Army, after explaining to him in a highly satisfactory manner—and to themselves also—the desperate straits they had been reduced to through the ruthless stealing of their calves and slick-ears, common property, by the most lawless band of cut-throat thieves, cattle-rustlers, horse-stealers and hold-up men that ever infested the West. When the fact of the matter was, with a few exceptions, that they were peaceable, law-abiding citizens who had got themselves a few cattle and were trying to build themselves up a home. Of course there were a number of rustlers in the country that would do anything from running off a bunch of horses to holding up a bank and when they got into trouble or were hung to cottonwoods there was nothing ever thought about it only it was a good thing.

So, after listening to all these things told by the association men, it was natural that the General should comply with their request and send the troops if called upon to do so.

The price which I have stated as being paid to the raiders by the stockmen was told by some of the ex-members of the band themselves, and they also said that Frank Canton, the leader, had misrepresented everything to them and, being strangers to that country and the men in it, they had believed him until they found out for themselves that it was nothing but a general killing expedition gotten up by the association to drive out all the nesters, small ranchmen, discourage the settlement of the land and thereby preserve the range for their vast herds of cattle and horses, and, failing, they were doomed and their day had passed forever.

WHEN I started out to write, it was merely with the idea of a short letter to Camp-Fire in regards to the corrections made by Mr. F. W. Conness. What Mr. Bechdolt used I do not know, but I do know that the men in the cabin that were attacked were Nate Champion and Nick Ray, and that the man on the wagon of hay was not Tom King, but Jack Flag, and that all the other corrections I have made are correct, and all the rest of the narrative that I have written was told me by participators in the war and other incidents by eye-witnesses while I was living in and around Buffalo. Well, as I said once before, when I started in I intended this for Camp-Fire, but I have written so much that I don't know where it does belong, or if it belongs anywhere.

Am an ex-soldier myself. I enlisted in Cheyenne, Wyo., in the light battery and served in the Philippines in the Spanish-American Filipino insurrection. I served from 1898 until the fall of '99. Have been in Alaska for the last 15 years.—JOHN RAWSON.

With the above came the following letter from Mr. Rawson. If I've left in it some pleasant things about our magazine, I've omitted more, so be easy on me, for praise from the old-timers is doubly appreciated and mighty hard not to pass on to everybody.

This is my first offense in this line and it may be the last, but I thought that possibly you might find a little stuff in that mess of junk I am inclosing that would be of interest to you or some of the old Western readers, as the descriptions of events at the time are all facts.

I have read your magazine for years and in all kinds of places. I have read it here in Alaska away back in the interior where it had to be packed in by dogs or horses for three hundred miles over glaciers, mountain streams, and through a country uninhabited except by wolves and wild game. Sometimes men would lose their way in a snow-storm or it would get so cold that they would freeze to death and never be found until their bones had been picked clean. The place that I speak of was a mining-camp, and when we would get one of your magazines it would cost us $1.50 per copy, but we were glad to get them at almost any price.

I have read many stories in *Adventure* of countries that I have been in and the topography and characters are both very familiar to me, which makes the story the more interesting. Then I am quite a reader of "Camp-Fire" and I think that is one of the most interesting sections of the whole magazine. The discussions that one usually finds going on and the exchange of ideas is interesting and educational, in some instances.

I wish that I could see your plant in New York and that you could see Alaska in exchange. I think that our magnificent mountains and our noble Mt. McKinley with its old hoary head that rears itself into the sky for over twenty thousand feet, would be a sight for you to see. Add to that the wild game, and the wild grandeur in general of the country would leave a lasting impression on you that you would often think about on a hot Summer's day in your office when you had the collar of your shirt rolled down and the sleeves rolled up.—J. R.

Well, Mr. Rawson, if you ever do come to New York, the office door hangs mighty free on its hinges, particularly to our old-timers.

A FRAGMENT out of a letter to Arthur D. Howden Smith from a reader in appreciation of the *Swain* stories. Mr. Smith sent it to me because the words "Bowyer and Fletcher" in modern type across a modern letter-head were startling and dramatic to him and he thought I might find them the same. I did.

Entirely with my eyes open I give Mr. Stemmler's address, *Adventure* thereby giving him a free advertisement for his business. I don't know him personally, but a man whose business is the making of long bows in these advanced days of poison gas and other similar evidences of civilization and enlightened development certainly deserves to be advertised among us who have a liking for manly things however old.

I want to give a fair deal. If there are any more bowyers and fletchers among us, let 'em speak up and, unless there are far more than I think, I'll gladly give them a similar "ad." If any one else thinks he can get a free "ad" out of me for some other business, well, let him try it.

However, if any of you make chain armor, Damascus blades, Roman triremes or anything like that, let me know and I'll see what I can do. Picturesqueness ought to be rewarded.

And, while I'm not much good with any of them—automatics, revolvers, rifles, shotguns or bows, I think I'd rather be a good archer than equally good with any of the others. I don't mean popping gentle little arrows at a paper target but using a real bow for real purposes. Now, gun-cranks, slay me. But read the letter first:

9415-215 St., Queens, Long Island, New York.

. . . . As you see from my letterhead I am a bowyer and fletcher, one of the few in the States. I turn out bows that even *Swain* himself or his stoutest house-carl would find pleasure in pulling—and they could drive a broad-headed shaft clean through a polar bear with them, too.

Coming as I do from sea-faring folk on one side and Cossacks on the other, stirring tales of the sea and land hit me right where I live.—L. E. STEMMLER.

OUR Camp-Fire Stations are spreading steadily over the map. Help make them grow. Any one may apply for a Camp-Fire Station.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin board

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

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209—Quartzite. Buck Conner, Box 4.
Arkansas—161—Hot Springs. Tom Manning, Jr., 322 Morrison Ave.
California—28—Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, Cottage Inn.
60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
74—Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.
89—Chico. K. W. Mason, 1428 Park Ave.
108—Helendale. G. R. Wells, P. O. Box 17.
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114—Mill Valley. L. F. Guedet, Restawhyle Knoll.
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117—Miami. Miami Canoe Club, 115 S. W. South River Drive.
128—Titusville. Max von Koppelow, Box 1014.
139—St. Petersburg. Capt. Lee Whetstone, Hotel Poinsettia.
143—St. Petersburg. J. G. Barnhill, 10 Third St. N.
158—Crescent City. E. N. Clark, care *Call.*
188—Johnson. Clifford Martin.
258—Jacksonville. T. J. Eppes, The Hobby Shop.
262—Wildwood. E. M. Dilly, L. B. 114.
Georgia—98—Hinesville. R. N. Martin, *The Liberty County Herald.*
Idaho—110—Pocatello. C. W. Craig, 223 S. Second Ave.
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90—Linton. Herschell Isom, 73 Tenth St., N. E.
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Louisiana—191—Melville. Wm. P. Stephens.
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140—New Orleans. J. D. Montgomery, Navy Recruiting Office.
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59—Augusta. Robie M. Liscomb, 73½ Bridge St.
111—Lewiston. Howard N. Lary, 714 Main Street.
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151—Williamsport. L. J. Schaefer. Frederick St.
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106—Gaylord. Sidney M. Cook.
131—North Muskegon. James Fort Forsyth, Forsyth Publisher's Service, Phone 5891.
137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 309 So. Saginaw St
192—Pickford. Dr. J. A. Cameron, The Grand Theater.
227—Adrian. S. N. Cook, 221 Clinton St.
Minnesota—112—St. Paul. St. Paul *Daily News*, 92 E. Fourth St.
145—Brainerd. F. T. Tracey, care Brainerd Gas & Electric Co.
Mississippi—88—Tunica. C. S. Swann, Tunica Plumbing & Electric Shop.
99—Picayune. D. E. Jonson.
268—Pascagonla. C. E. Walter, 239 Orange St.
Missouri—51—St. Louis. W. R. Hoyt, 7921 Van Buren St., phone Riverside 250.
94—St. Louis. C. Carter Lee, M. D., 3819 Olive St.
127—Salem. Emmet C. Higgins, 100 N. Tenth St.
Montana—240—Fort Missoula, Company C, 4th Infantry.
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229—Santa Fe. N. Howard Thorp, 103 Palace Ave.
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91—Tenafly. Ed Stiles, P. O. Box 254.
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245—Corbin City. Lee Roberts.
260—Camden. Benj. P. Thomas, 2791 Constitution Rd.
269—Eugene Connett, 170 Turrel Ave., South Orange.

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34—New York City. St. Mary's Men's Club, 142 Alexander Ave., Bronx, N. Y. C.
147—Youngsville. Harry Malowitz, Youngsville House.
165—Saratoga. Wm. Marshall, Office No. 9, Chamber of Commerce Arcade.
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185—Brooklyn. J. M. Canavan, 69 Bond St.
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239—Brooklyn. Arthur Borchmann, 451 Rodney St.

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159—Waynesville. Harry M. Hall, 720 Walnut St.
92—Biltmore. C. Marshall Gravatt, Felstone Co.
255—Tryon. Howard Shannon.

North Dakota—206—Fairmount. Frank Kitchener, Richland Hotel.

Ohio—58—Cleveland. J. F. Thompson, Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
52—Ulrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, 329 W. Fourth St.
63—Ulrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.
75—Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.
113—Buena Vista. Geo. T. Watters.
166—Toledo. Frank P. Carey, 3267 Maplewood Ave., or wherever his Ford happens to be.
207—Columbus. Tod S. Raper, 77 Taylor Ave.
241—Cincinnati. D. W. Davidson, 1414 Vine St.
242—Bellefontaine. Harry E. Edselle, 328 Plumvalley St.
263—Toledo. F. P. Carey, Box 143, Station A.
264—Toledo. S. G. La Plante, 1820 Dunham St.

Oklahoma—57—Haskell. Roy Holt.
225—Shawnee. A. M. Postlethwaite, 521 N. Beard St.
234—Blackwell. H. W. Willis, 204½ N. Main St.

Oregon—4—Salem. D. Wiggins.

Pennsylvania—20—Philadelphia. Wm. A. Fulmer, 252 S. Ninth St.
21—Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.
24—Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach. 4159 N. Eighth Street, and Spring Mills Station, P. & R. Ry. Co., Montgomery County.
78—Pittsburgh. Peter C. Szarmach, 3030 Brereton St.
100—Philadelphia. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 926 N. 41st St.
182—Greensburg. Don Frederick Wermuth.
224—Oil City. J. M. Blair, 608 W. Front St.
247—Pittsburgh. J. F. Lichtenhaler, 224 Swope St.
248—Philadelphia. Carl D. Charles, 214 East St., Wissahickon.
261—Shippensberg. *The Chronicle*, 12 South Earl St.

South Dakota—179—Fairburn. Jesse K. Fell, *Custer County Press*.
270—Centerville. C. H. Hornbeck. *The Centerville Journal*.

South Carolina—217—Charleston. J. H. Keener, 346 King St.
97—Charleston. J. W. Mette, Navy Yard.

Tennessee—195—Knoxville. C. G. Pruden, 2024 Rose Ave.

Texas—33—Houston. J. M. Shamblin, 4805 Oakland St.
123—San Juan. D. L. Carter, Box 436.
134—Breckenridge. Joe Randel, 226 Baylor Avenue.
148—Port Arthur. Ralph C. Cornwell, 215 Eighth St.
174—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West Eighth St.
183—South San Antonio. J. F. Nicodemus, Box 111, So. San Antonio Transfer.
218—Fort Worth. Robert Lentz, R No. 6 Box 73.
208—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West 8th St.
271—Harlingon. H. C. Jennings, Box 324.

Utah—157—Salt Lake City. Ned Howard, 127 N. St.

Virginia—108—Cape Charles. Lynn Stevenson, P. O. Box 26.
219—Richmond. Wm. Meek, 104 S. 1st St.

Washington—1—Ione. A. S. Albert, Albert's Billiard Hall.
61—Burlington. Judge B. N. Albertson, Fairhaven Ave.
83—Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book-Store, 1330 First Ave.
154—Mt. Vernon. Miss Beatrice Bell, Western Washington Auto Club.
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220—Sultan. George W. Snyder, Main St., opp. Post Office.

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Wisconsin—41—Madison. Frank Weston, 401 Gay Bldg.
138—Tomahawk Lake. Mrs. J. S. Hughson, Hughson's Resort.

Australia—39—Melbourne. William H. Turner, "Wolwoling" Keen St. Northcote; and Carters' and Drivers' Union, 46 William St.
76—Victoria. Chas. M. Healy, 30, The Avenue, Windsor Post, Dist. No. 8.
130—Brisbane. H. V. Shead, Sutton St., Kangaroo Pt.
235—Sydney. Phillip Norman, 842 Military Road, Nosman, Newtown.

Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Place de l'Entrepot 3.

Bermuda—230—St. George's. Fred C. Taylor, Wainright Cottage.

British Columbia—231—Stewart. Jack O'Shea, Ryan Bldg.
236—Vancouver. A. Johnson, 552-3 Hastings St.

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4—Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
29—Deseronto, Ontario. Harry M. Moore, *The Post Weekly*.
45—Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 84 La Riviere St.
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62—Woodstock, Ontario. George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St.
85—Oshawa, Ontario. J. Worral, 6½ King St. E.
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221—Montreal East. M. M. Campbell, 95 Broadway.
249—Fallowfield, Ontario. Ernest Armstrong.
250—Sault Ste. Marie. James McDonald, 504 Queen St. E.

Canal Zone—37—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.
156—Ancon. Arthur Haughton, Box 418.

China—222—Tientsin. Dr. George W. Twomey, 43 Rue de France.

Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominquez, 7 Cerro.
175—Miranda, Oriente. Volney L. Held.

Egypt—173—Khartoum, Sudany. W. T. Moffat, Sudan Customs.

Hawaiian Islands—170—Leilehua, Oahu, Château Shanty.
272—Honolulu, Hawaii. Hubert T. Miller, Room 4, Silent Hotel.

Honduras, C. A.—32—Galeras, Olancho. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson.
70—La Ceiba. Jos Buckly Taylor.

India—197—Calcutta. W. Leishman, 46 Wellesley St.

Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.

Navy—71—U. S. *Arizona*. Elmer E. McLean

Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mars, Smallwood Bldg.

Porto Rico—46—Ensenada. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 5.

Philippine Islands—198—Manila. W. W. Weston, De La Rama Bldg.

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Lost Trails, for finding missing relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sung."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
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12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—17. Asia. In Four Parts
18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey
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28—30. Balkans. In Three Parts.
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32. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
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Standing Information

Aviation Terms

THE language of the air is rapidly developing words incomprehensible to the layman, as the language of the sea already has done:

Question:—"Recently I have read several books of fiction dealing with aviation. Several of the positions of the ship in motion I could not understand; namely, the 'Immelmann turn', 'barrel roll,' 'falling leaf' and the term 'banking the ship.'

If you send this letter and the answer to *Adventure* kindly withhold my name."—W. I. B., Princeton, Ind.

Answer, by Lieut.-Col. Schauffler:—"Barrel roll." A maneuver in which a complete revolution about the longitudinal axis is made, the horizontal direction of flight being approximately maintained.

"Banking the ship." To heel for the purpose of turning. To put one plane tip higher than the other.

"Falling leaf." This is a stunt which derives its name from the effect the plane gives from the ground when coming down operated by a clever pilot. You have often seen in the Autumn a leaf falling, first skidding to one side, righting itself, and coming down in the opposite direction. These are the movements that a pilot puts his plane into when executing this stunt. It is done by banking the ship steeply to one side, kicking the rudder to the same side and skidding and then reversing the movement back and forth.

"Immelmann turn." This turn, or as it is known in the French vernacular, *renversement*, is a stunt taught in the school of acrobatics and was invented by the famous German ace, Immelmann. It is a very useful trick to know when engaged in aerial combat. It consists of pulling the plane sharply up while going at a great speed into what might be called a half-loop, kicking the rudder over and turning the plane in an upside-down position to a right-side-up position but going in the opposite direction from the direction in which it was started.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Australian Golds Strike

THE historic rushes to Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie in the 90's:

Question:—"When about fourteen years of age I visited the shores of Australia on board a tramp trading-vessel. This tramp was from no port in particular, and its destination was unknown to all save the captain.

It was in 1886 that another runaway and I boarded the *Ivanhoe*, which subsequently took us into many, many ports that did not appear on our maps of the world. At this time western Australia was burning up with yellow fever. Great deposits of rich yellow gold had just been discovered, and the desire to get rich quick rankled in the bosoms of the multitude that swarmed into that wild and unknown country.

I have a vivid recollection of many dire and dreadful deeds enacted by some of those gold-crazed maniacs who were prepared at all times to kill any one who stood between them and the consummation of their unsated desire to accumulate great quantities of rich yellow ore.

I have been requested by many of my friends to tell them the story of my youthful days and with that end in view, I would be pleased to have you answer the following questions:

Please tell me about the plant and vegetable life of that part of Australia lying inside the tropics, where the great snakes and lizards that we read so much about abound mostly.

Where is it that the mercury rises to 140 degrees in the shade? Anything else that you may think would be interesting.

I hope I am not imposing too much on your good nature in making this extraordinary request of you. I have desisted from asking more questions because of the fear that I may be accused of trying to ride a free horse to death. However, I will be pleased to receive any information you see fit to send me."—H. W. N., Streator, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Norman:—The imagination of youth at the immature age of fourteen is apt to play one false in after life.

Personally I can recall nothing that occurred in my own case at fourteen, sixteen and eighteen even, except that I was studious and run away to sea on a wind-jammer at about seventeen.

If, as you say, you were in an Australian port in 1886, then I reply Coolgardie did not break out till 1892—six years later. And the boom did not reach its zenith until four or five years after that. The dazzling developments at Kalgoorlie, twenty-four miles farther east, started a boom which resulted in a tremendous influx of capital and added enormously to the world's visible stock of gold. You may be interested in a few personal experiences of the wonderful Kalgoorlie gold-fields, unique in formation, remarkably rich in patches and uniformly payable over a great strike of ore.

I spent ten years on the Kalgoorlie-Coolgardie gold-fields and was at many rushes, controlled many mining properties on behalf of capitalists and was well in the swim with the mob until the inevitable collapse arrived.

And what a fine set of fellows they were—aristocrats from all parts of the Empire who roughed it with the rest; adventurous Americans from faraway Alaska; French, German, Belgian and Russian geologists and capitalists who came to visit Mother Earth's new treasure-house; and the miners have ever since maintained their superb reputation for honesty, industry and fair play, strikes among them being as rare as angels' visits.

THE rush to Coolgardie in 1892 started at ~~a most~~ propitious moment. The continent was passing through the fiercest crisis since its foundation. In 1891 mushroon banks, building-societies and land companies toppled like so many houses of cards. As a result property sold for a song, unemployment was rife and thousands of men were looking for work at a dollar and a half and two dollars a day. But two dollars a day in the nineties was wealth compared with today, for rents were low and living cheap. In 1893 one "bached" at Coolgardie at a cost of less than five dollars a week.

Then came the news that a rich reef of gold had been discovered at Coolgardie. Further discoveries gave a tremendous impetus to the influx to west Australia.

Hobos, dead-beats, down-and-outs, once prosperous merchants, lawyers *et hoc genus omne* beat it to the West, for the great majority reached Coolgardie, like myself, with four or five dollars in their possession. In those days the slacker was unknown, the I. W. W. hadn't been discovered and Sovietism has not even been conceived, so every one worked. That is, every one pegged out a reef—outcrops are as thick in the West as corn-cobs in a field of maize—sunk a deep hole on the line of reef, took out a few tons of quartz, stacked it round the shaft, dolled up the specimen stuff outside the dump and then sat down to wait for a sucker in the shape of a purchaser.

When the boom started—well, I can tell you it was some humdinger. The custom was to buy an option of sale over the property for a period of three or six months and to pay ten per cent. of the total for the option. Of course, ninety per cent. of the mines proved duds. The average success in mining does not really exceed five per cent.

There was an abundance of "salting." I knew of one case where a short block of rich stone had been cemented in the face of a short drive and sold "on the blind" to a "boots" mining expert for £5,000 cash. It wasn't worth a dish of potatoes.

The Londonderry was one of Coolgardie's most notorious "dopes." An enormous quantity of nugget gold was taken out of an outcrop of buck quartz by a party of hard-up prospectors who were down to their last packet of baking-soda. To keep off inquirers and to cover up the operations of the owners, the buck reef was surrounded by a galvanized-iron fence, behind which access was as difficult to secure as the mansions of the gods. Eventually the property was bought by Lord Fingall for, I think, over a million dollars (£250,000). A company was formed in London and work started at once.

THE bubble was soon blown. The original owners had determined the extent of the deposit by jumping a few holes in the bottom of a shallow shaft, so when the purchasing company took over the mine and started to scoop out gold in the same ratio as the prospectors, it discovered that only a thin layer of rich stone had been left behind. The company sank and drove in every direction, but never obtained sufficient gold to pay the cost of the firewood for the boilers.

An American assayer, Charlie Kauffman, had a similar experience; and a prospector named Fred Merton staked a rich show over one hundred miles north of Coolgardie, and Merton extracted an enormous quantity of gold. The bakery boxes were frequently clogged with heavy ships of gold. I think Merton received £10,000 in cash from Kauffman, plus a block of paid-up shares; but the mine was also a shyster. Merton had left nothing behind worth mentioning. In a year or two it was merely a romantic memory.

I suppose you will be interested in these facts. To the ordinary gold-seeker they will carry an irresistible appeal. Nothing dazzles the imagination of the adventurer more strongly than rich deposits of native gold, pregnant with promise of the treasury of Midas. I recall one of a number of similar experiences at a field called the Heather, twelve miles east of Coolgardie. When a trench, fifty feet long, six feet deep and two feet wide had been exposed for my inspection, I saw slugs of gold glittering in a deposit of brecciated quartz. The price demanded was £10,000 cash, of which £2,000 must be paid forthwith by way of option-deposit. The stipulation that the trench should be boarded over and a shaft sunk off the line of reef, which should be intersected by a cross-cut at one hundred feet at once aroused my suspicion, and I threw in the towel, and my judgment was right. The mine was sold all right, all right, but the option-holder's reward was a small crushing of stone proving four hundred or five hundred ounces of gold.

But what halcyon days they were! The mines were located in the center of a desert with a rainfall of from nothing to three or four inches per annum. All the water was salt and had to be condensed, often sold quite warm before aeration and cost me in places up to five shillings per gallon. It was cheaper to wash in beer.

I REMEMBER on one occasion, during a journey of ten or eleven days through country where water was preternaturally absent, my camel—pungent, irascible, contemptuous beast that he was, like all his infernal race—was as flat as a sword and as hollow as a drum when we, or rather he, pulled up at a vagrant condenser at Goongarrie, ninety miles north of Coolgardie. Turning his head and "bubbling" a snarling invitation to dismount, he plunged his inflated nostrils into a trough of condensed water got ready for his delectation.

I sat and watched him gulp down my good money at the rate of one and one-quarter dollars per measured gallon of H_2O. When he lifted his head with a deep, contented sigh, the condenser guy started to count up the cost. As his Majesty required twenty-four gallons to make him swell up like a poisoned pup, the condenser shark refused to accept a dime less than one hundred and twenty dollars as his cut.

Coming down to the gravamen of your charge that "those gold-crazed maniacs were prepared at all times to kill any one who stood between them and their consummation of their unsated desire to accumulate great quantities of rich yellow ore," my retort is the Scotch verdict of "not proven."

The sweltering fields were invaded by droves of hobos, riffraff and hooligans from all quarters of the universe. But they were not gunmen. The search for gold converted them into fine fellows, law-abiding citizens. Personally I know of no greater fascination than the lure of gold at its native lair. It gives the digger a new outlook on life and cultivates the best that is in him. If you want to locate a finer fellow on earth than the gold-seeker with his foot on his native heath, I really believe you will have to look for him on the other side of the river Jordan with very little prospect of finding him.

CRIME was remarkably rare on the gold-fields. The only shooting that I ever heard was a vicious slug to the point of the jaw or the popping of a cork. Indeed the latter was far more frequent than the slug. Enmities were wiped out to the joyful clatter of the popping of champagne corks.

The crook was quickly dealt with. A roll up was called by means of beating on a prospector's tin dish and the offender dealt with according to his merits.

Gun-play was rare. One or two mobs of threatening niggers were shot up; and there were one or two killings. All these were mere side-issues to the industry.

On one occasion it narrowly came to a wholesale shoot-up in consequence of the publication of false reports concerning a shyster rush by a Coolgardie paper. Every one rushed to the scene, fifty miles away, only to find the paper had been misled by its informant. The men were as angry as an overturned hive of bees. They rushed the paper office with rifles and gats, and for the moment the situation was very ugly. But the local sergeant of police—that fine Irish Australian, Sergeant McKenna—threw oil on the troubled waters and made the mob disperse without arresting anything more threatening than "a pail of suds."

Alack! How things have changed since then! Coolgardie is dead as J. Caesar, and its buildings are dismantled and sold at war prices, whilst Kalgoorlie has settled down into a thriving center of thrifty workers and prospectors. With the extraction of the rich deposits of gold in the upper levels and the exhaustion of glittering deposits of tellurids, mining has become a purely commercial industry. When gold ore falls below ten dollars per ton, science steps in to economize the costs of production to the last farthing.

But the joyous, optimistic, fair-dealing prospector and wage-earner remains to carry on the splendid traditions of the pioneers of the field.

But then every group of gold-diggers under the Southern Cross bears the same estimable character. The search for gold purges the dross and leaves behind a clean, husky and hefty Anglo-Saxon, as brave as a pebble and as hospitable as any *homo* on this fascinating speck of mud.

I trust you will not think this screed interminable. Some of it is of deep interest, for it is the first time that I have transmitted my glorious experiences on the best Australian gold-fields on paper.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Taking the Human Smell off Traps

A FEW bits of the lore of trapping and hunting:

Question:—"On seeing your name as the *Adventure* magazine representative, I decided that this was my opportunity to get some information that I have been after for some time.

What is the best way of taking the human smell off traps before setting?

What do you consider the best set to catch mink, and how made?

What is a good bait for mink?

What is the best bait and set for coyotes? Could you advise me where I could get a book on trapping and hunting?

On shooting ducks on the wing: Where would you aim on a duck coming direct toward you at an average speed? Where would you aim on a duck flying sidewise to you?

How much difference do you allow for geese?

What do you consider the best big-game rifle?"—P. MEEK, Watson., Sask., Canada.

Answer, by Mr. Moore:—Best trap for mink is the No. 1 H. & N. steel trap or the No. 1 Newhouse, procurable at any hardware store carrying this type of goods.

Some trappers swear by the efficacy of cat's excreta as a scent for mink, and although I believe there are various preparations put up I don't know anything to beat it.

Best way to take the human scent off traps is to boil them when new and afterward handle them only when wearing mitts.

The coyote is just about the most cunning animal to trap that exists. He will eat anything, however, and a little poison in a piece of meat of any sort is about the most effective way of getting him.

Am afraid I can not recall any reliable book on trapping, but you might write *Field and Stream* or one of the other publications of this type. In any event I don't think that trapping learned from books is worth a ——. The best way is to tie up with an experienced trapper and by putting up the grubstake induce him to form a partnership and teach you what he knows of the game.

No doubt there are lots of theories as to the point at which to aim at a flying duck; but every one seems to have a different idea, and most of the good shots I know say it is a matter of instinct, and depends entirely on the type of duck, speed at which it is flying, etc. There are many different varieties of duck and all have different habits and speed of flight. In the circumstances I don't think it would be wise to advance my own opinions as it might only start some controversy. Best way is to try it out and stick to the method which proves most successful.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Getting into the Forest Service

HOW the Civil Service examinations are held:

Question:—"Am thinking very strongly of taking up a Civil Service exam to be a forest ranger and thought maybe you could give me a general idea of it. Enclosed find stamp and addressed envelop."—STANLEY JEROME WISE, Dayton, O.

Answer, by Mr. Ernest Shaw:—A Civil Service examination for the position of forest ranger is usually held each year in the latter part of October at all headquarter towns for the various national forests and at a few other cities throughout the country. Of late years this examination has consisted entirely of written work, the so-called "field examination" having been abandoned.

For the past three or four years the questions have been submitted to the class on two and sometimes three sheets with a varying number to the sheet. Only one sheet is given out at a time, and the additional sheets are handed out as the former one is completed.

The rules for holding these examinations provide that no applicant may take to the classroom any paper with written or printed matter upon it, nor may he communicate in any way with the other members of the class. Neither may he leave the room for any purpose prior to the completion of any one paper or set of questions. If necessary so to leave the room his incomplete paper is taken up and he is not permitted to complete it.

The first thing for you to do is to write the U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington, D. C., requesting that an application blank be sent you. With the blank will be found enclosed a circular regarding the coming examination and a list of the cities and towns in which it will be held. Great care should be used by you in filling out this paper, since your rating on *experience* is obtained from it. This should be kept in mind, particularly in answering the questions about your former work which, if any, bears on the work of the service, such as work on farms and ranches; handling stock, horses, cattle or sheep; work in the logging woods or at a sawmill; surveying and the like. Do not be afraid of going into all detail necessary to give them a clear idea of what you know and can do, since experience covers forty per cent. of the possible one hundred per cent. covering the entire examination. Men that often pass a very creditable written test, fall down on experience for that reason.

The same may be said to be also true of the written test at time of examination. Don't be afraid to use plenty of paper, which is furnished you by the examiner; and don't be afraid to take all the time allowed, which in the past has been always six hours. Give them all you've got, and use time and care with your penmanship. The rating officer has not time to waste in trying to figure out what an applicant is trying to write. If he can not read the paper readily he marks it a "goose egg" and goes on to the next.

I can not give you help regarding the actual questions except in a very general way, since each st is entirely different from all previous ones. there will be questions on surveying and lumbering, fire-fighting and stock-raising. Probably the com-ating of areas in simple form, which will require you to know and use the number of feet in a rod and a mile.

ALSO you should know what is meant by the variation of the compass, and be able to state the declination for some country with which you are familiar. You should know and be able to apply by name some practical rule for finding out the board content of a log of any given diameter and length. Also be able to describe some national forest with which you are more or less familiar, giving its principal topographic features, and have something to say about its resources.

You will also have to be prepared to answer some very practical questions about fighting forest fires. You may run up against questions regarding cattle-branding—either have to draw out brands from a written description or identify brands in writing from the printed object. This has sometimes been included.

A study of Carey's manual "Woodsman's Handbook" might be of great help to you. To date there have never been given so-called "catch questions." All are very practical, and the taking of the examination is a liberal education as to what you know or don't know. Whether you pass it or not, you will find it interesting.

An applicant must receive a rating of 70 per cent or better to pass. Ex-service men of any war are required to obtain only 65 per cent to pass, and preference is also given them for appointment. Applicants must be between the ages of 21 and 40 years at the time of passing or taking the examination.

Papers are usually rated and applicants informed of the rating obtained by the following March or April. The eligible list from which appointments are made is usually issued soon after the applicants are notified of ratings.

The entrance salary is $1220 per annum, and rangers have to provide their own horse and living equipment. They are given a forage and a travel allowance in addition to their salary, and usually quarters are provided with stoves or ranges and a limited equipment, though seldom bedding.

Many men have found it advisable to work for a summer season or two on some national forest in the West before attempting to take the examination. You do not need to be uneasy about attempting it for that reason, however. It is not considered a difficult one for an average, wide-awake man to pass. He must, however, have some knowledge of the matters involved.

If you decide to take the examination, permit me to wish you the best of luck. I hope that you will find herein the information you desired.

When you get something for nothing, don't make the other fellow pay the postage on it.

Whales and Whaling

HUNTING the world's biggest game:

Question:—"I dislike very much to disturb you in this manner; but public libraries are unavailable to me, whose ship remains in port (a tanker) twenty-fours hours generally, and ofttimes less. Also I am sure you have at your finger-tips facts that I might never find out for myself otherwise. So I take the liberty to address you these questions.

First and generally: I wish a whole encyclopedia about whales; in short terse words.

Numerating: Their habitats and seasons of gathering at these habitats. Average weight and length and amount of oil and bone. Greatest weight, length and amount of oil and bone. Value of gallon of oil. Of bone per pound.

Method used by whalers to extract this oil. Probable loss on an average whale when whalers of experience have taken all they can before the body sinks.

Are whales as numerous as always? You might if you have the facts handy, tell me of the best banks where whales are always to be found, and any other facts, just in short words to make it easy for you.

I am a master of steam vessel for two years and a chief mate for four years.

That I'm going whaling is obvious, and I will certainly appreciate your kindness. As a last word you might mention books or other sources of information on the subject, for I realize I've got a lot to learn.

Thank you a hundred times; and when I take my first whale I'll remember to send you a part of him."—G. T. B., San Pedro, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. B. Brown:—There are a dozen different varieties of whale. For example, the bowhead or right whale, the largest of all, which of recent years is found almost exclusively in the Arctic. The sperm whale is found in all of the waters of the globe, and the old-fashioned whaler after sperm whale quite frequently in a leisurely way circled the entire globe, killing sperm whale everywhere from the Caribbean Sea to the Indian Ocean or the Sea of Japan. As it feeds on the giant squid, the sperm whale is found more often in tropical waters; but it can be found at any season of the year in any waters from the Arctic to the Antarctic shore ice. There are no seasons for whaling.

There is enormous variation in the size of whales and in their oil contents. A big bull sperm whale will run up to seventy feet in length and under the old conditions of trying out on shipboard might give one hundred and forty barrels of oil and spermaceti. The right whale runs considerably larger and gives up to one hundred and eighty barrels of oil and possibly a ton of baleen or whalebone. Indeed the principal money in bowhead of recent years and until the fishery died out was in the baleen or whalebone, which brought as high as $2.50 a pound; but sperm oil and spermaceti were much more valuable than the oils from the Arctic whale.

The humpback whale run about fifty tons in weight; the finback give hardly twenty barrels of oil; the sulphur-bottom a little more, as does the bottle-nose. Blackfish rank as whale, which they are in fact, but hardly pay to kill for the oil, as it commands a low price. Any commercial paper can give you the present prices of whale oil.

NOW to give you the present facts. Deep-water whaling is a dead industry. Except a few schooners with Portuguese crews, making short cruises to the Caribbean Sea, I don't think there is a deep-water whaler afloat. The industry is now conducted from shore stations. There are such shore stations at Humboldt and Monterey Bay in California and at Grey's Harbor in Washington; and there are four whaling-stations in Alaska waters. At each station there are several small, fast steam-tugs of about one hundred tons register with crews of ten or eleven men and mounting three and one-half inch, swivel, smooth-bore muzzle-loading guns, firing a bomb lance. Ordinarily one shot will kill a whale if it explodes internally, leaving the line fast to him. The whale are towed ashore and cut up there.

There is no longer any waste. All of the oil is tried out, and the meat dried, ground up and sold as ingredients of feeds for stock and fowl. Everything else goes into fertilizer.

Of the whale taken in southern waters off the coast the majority are humpbacks with an occasional sperm or other whale. In northern waters, especially in the Alaska stations, bowhead or right whale are frequently killed.

The catch at each of these stations runs into hundreds annually, and my own impression is that they are killing off the remaining whale much more rapidly than the old whalers did. As a matter of fact, one of these little craft with its small crew will kill more whale in a year than the old whaler with a crew of forty or fifty men did in a three-year voyage; and men and officers can sleep ashore every night and get their meals in a shore cookhouse. I do not see how old-fashioned whaling can compete with these methods. My impression is that, except in Alaska, this whaling goes on all of the year around. At some of the Alaska stations the whaling goes on only after the ice goes out of Bering Sea. Others in southeastern Alaska run all of the year around.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Railroad Construction in British Africa

THE source of first-hand information on the subject:

Question:—"Will you kindly send me some general information on that part of Africa which you are so familiar with? What I am most interested in is engineering—construction of new railroads, etc. I understand that there are opportunities for young engineers in British East Africa, but there is no name given to send any questions pertaining to this district in *Adventure*."—FRANK P. TIBBITTS, Annapolis, Md.

Answer, by Mr. Simpson:—I don't know a thing about railroad construction in East Africa, and don't know anybody who does. West Africa is something else again; much more unhealthful and more or less best kept away from.

However, as you're the doctor, information on this subject—railroad construction, etc.—for both East and West Africa can be had from the British Colonial Office, London; and if you tell them just what you want—the kind of job, the kind of salary, etc.—and ask them for just the kind of information you are particularly anxious to get, I'm sure they'll be only too glad to accommodate you.

Railroad construction and operation are Government operations in both East and West Africa. Hence this reference to the Colonial Office.

Sorry I can't be any more explicit; but in tropical colonies conditions change so rapidly that no man is competent to give anything like sure information on a subject of this sort unless he is right on the spot.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose FULL return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

Long-Distance Horseback-Riding

AN "ASK ADVENTURE" inquiry prompted General Robinson to address the subjoined letter to a first-hand authority. The original inquiry is omitted because General Robinson's letter is a rephrasing of the points on which information was requested:

MR. WAYNE DINSMORE,
Secretary, Horse Association of America,
Union Stock Yards,
Chicago, Ill.

My dear Sir:

I wish certain information regarding the traveling ability of the horse, and have been referred to you as one who could give the information.

Specifically:

What is the record of the longest distance traveled by horse and rider in one day?

Tests of this nature have been made by the U. S. Army and others, I believe. What has been the result, or can you tell me of any published information that would answer my queries?

Enclosed find addressed envelop and return postage.—H. F. ROBINSON.

The following is an excerpt from the last letter of a series; but the accompanying report is published complete:

GEN. H. F. ROBINSON,
Albuquerque, N. M.

My dear General Robinson:

I have had our research librarian make an exhaustive examination of available files relative to long-distance rides and am enclosing the attached report.

I am enclosing also a little booklet giving a report of the endurance rides which have been held in the last six years.—WAYNE DINSMORE, Secretary.

ENDURANCE RIDES

THROUGH the courtesy of Wayne Dinsmore, Secretary of the Horse Association of America, the following facts regarding endurance rides are given.

The longest distance traveled by horse and rider in twenty-four hours seems to be that covered by the couriers of General Wesley Merritt, who in 1879 covered one hundred and seventy miles in a little less than twenty-four hours, This would be at the rate of seven miles an hour for the full time. It is not certain whether or not they changed horses on the trip.

In the "endurance tests" or long-distance rides the most important requirement is generally recognized to be the condition of the horse. This form of sport commenced in Europe after the close of the Franco-Prussian War and became an international sport beginning in 1892 when there was a race between Austro-Hungarian and German officers. These were under the auspices of the emperors of these countries and were in the shape of races between Berlin and Vienna. The Austro-Hungarians were victorious, but it cost the lives of many horses.

In 1904 in a ride between Lyons and Vichy 32 horses took part; six of these had to give up. In the Vienna-Berlin ride, out of 199 horses taking part 27 horses died. In another one from Dresden to Leipsic, out of 33 taking part, not less than ten horses succumbed. In the Brussels-Ostend ride out of 22 taking part two died on the road and two more after arrival. In the Upsala-Stockholm ride only one rider out of twenty-one gave up. This shows that care and attention to the condition of the horse on the long-distance rides is steadily increasing.

ON OCTOBER 30, 1912, Captain Frank Tompkins rode the pure-bred Arab stallion Razzia from Northfield, Vt., to Fort Ethan Allen, a distance of fifty-one miles, and back the same day. This horse, which stood 14.2 hands high and weighed nine hundred and fifty pounds, carried a hundred and seventy-five pounds on his back. The most important feature in the performance, however, was that after the journey of 102 miles in a single day he showed no weariness and was in condition the next morning to have repeated the feat. Time on the road, 15 hours and 30 minutes.

On September 6, 1912, this same horse, ridden by Parker Tompkins, went from Northfield to Winsor, Vt., 70 miles, in 13 hours, including all stops; and two days later he returned on a very hot day, covering the distance including all stops in 15 hours.

Captain Reid rode 154 miles over hilly country, carrying 180 pounds in 30 hours and 42 minutes, winning first prize in an endurance test. The horse was a three-quarters Arabian called Halcyon.

A pure-bred Arabian, Yaquis, covered the same course with 160 pounds in 30 hours and 37 minutes with Lieut. R. M. Parker up.

The *U. S. Cavalry Journal* of July, 1915, contains an account of an officers' endurance race run after three o'clock in the afternoon and through the dark over a 71-mile course. None of the officers knew where the course was until they were ready to mount. Capt. Frank Parker won in 8 hours and 25 minutes.

Busby, in *The Trotting and Pacing Horse in America*, under heading of "Championship Records" gives for the distance of 100 miles Conqueror, bay gelding, 1853, 8:55:05.

The *Chicago Daily News Almanac*, 1924, gives the record for 100 miles relay race as 4:19:40, ridden by George Osbaldiston using 16 horses.

IN THE Army endurance rides from 1919 to 1922 the winners were as follows:

1919. Fort Ethan Allen, Vt., to Camp Devens, Ayer, Mass. Distance, 300 miles. Weight carried, 200 pounds. 14 started, 8 finished. Ramla, ten-year-old mare, was first with a total time of 51 hours 26½ minutes.

1920. Same course. Distance, 300 miles. Weight carried, 245 pounds. 27 started, 10 finished. Mlle. Denise, nine-year-old mare, first; time, 46 hours 57 minutes.

1921. Camp Vail, N. J., to Washington, D. C. Distance, 300 miles. Weight carried, 245 pounds. Rustem Bey, who was given third place on points, made it in 48 hours, 27 minutes. Vagrant, given second place, in 48 hours and 5 minutes. The winner, Crabbett, who weighed only 925 pounds and was 75 to 80 pounds lighter than the two mentioned, was given first in 49 hours, 4 minutes. In this race condition counted 60 points and speed 40 points.

1922. This was at Fort Ethan Allen. Distance, 300 miles. Weight carried, 225 pounds. The winner was Vendetta. Time, 45 hours, 17 minutes. The next five were all less than 46 hours. 21 started in this ride and only 7 finished.

In the Berlin-Vienna ride, the distance was 600 km. (372.6 miles) and the winner Lieut. Starnberg of Donau, who made it in 71 hours, 42 minutes.

On July 27, 1897, officers of the 9th Army Corps of the German Army made a ride of 130 km. (80.7 miles) in 11 hours.

The Austrian Lieut. Mayrhofer, with two comrades, made a ride from Agram to Vienna, 402 km. (249.6 miles) in 39¾ hours. This was on horses that had been so used up in maneuvers that they had been sold at auction as entirely disabled. By pacing and trotting and finally leading them at the end they brought the horses through in good condition. Their average, including stops, was 10.113 km. (6.28 miles) per hour.

MAJ. HENRY ROMEYN in an article in *Outing* in 1904 gives some old records of long-distance riding in the American Army.

Felix N. Aubrey in 1851 rode in 5 days and 14 hours from Santa Fé to Independence, Mo. He rode 830 miles and used 7 horses.

Thomas Tobin in 1846, carrying dispatches for

General Kearney, rode from Santa Fé to Fort Leavenworth, 832 miles, in a little less than 11 days, using 9 horses. Most of his fresh horses were caught from herds of horses belonging to the Indians.

John Kerley in 1857 rode from Fort Bridger to Fort Leavenworth with dispatches, more than 1,000 miles, in 17 days, using only 4 horses.

In 1847 Col. John Frémont with two companions rode from Los Angeles to Monterey. Each man had three horses and changed every two hours. The first day they rode 125 miles between daybreak and nightfall; on the second day 135 miles between daybreak and nine at night; on the third day 70 miles between eleven o'clock and sunset; and on the fourth day they completed the journey, riding 90 miles, at three in the afternoon.

In June, 1868, a man named Morris rode from Saguche to Fort Garland, Colo., a little less than 100 miles, between 3 A.M. and 1.30 P.M. Two days later the same horse, a coal-black bronco, was ridden more than 80 miles.

AFTER the establishment of the "Pony Express" just before the Civil War many notable rides were made. 500 ponies and 200 men were engaged in this work, 80 of them being riders. The latter were selected mainly on account of their experience in the saddle, because they had been tested and were able to stand the fatigue of a gallop extending over 100 miles.

At that time news was carried from ocean to ocean in less than ten days. The last message of President Buchanan, in 1860, was brought into San Francisco in eight days and five hours, while President Lincoln's first address reached there in seven days and fourteen hours. Of course these long-distance runs were with changes of both horses and riders.

Probably the most notable ride of any single rider was that of Buffalo Bill (Col. W. F. Cody) who on one occasion, finding that the rider who was to relieve him had been killed by the Indians, rode 384 miles in 24 hours, changing horses thirty-six times. This was an average of sixteen miles an hour, day and night. Bob Haslam made one ride of 264 miles.

James Moore, a frontiersman, in the sixties rode 280 miles in twenty-two hours.

In 1923 the Pony Express Celebration Committee undertook to reproduce the old Pony Express run, riding from St. Joseph, Mo., to San Francisco. The total distance was 2,180 miles, which was covered in 158 hours, nearly two days better than the best old express record. Across California there were 34 relays, a distance of 259 miles, which was covered in 13 hours and 45 minutes, an average speed of 18.83 miles per hour.

"Mystery Island"

A BEAUTIFUL home for the white man when the cannibals are cleared out:

Question:—"1. Please describe the nature of the natives of Papua.

2. Did the natives have a rudimentary social system before the white men came?

3. Were the natives cannibals? If so, are they now?

4. In what way are the natives related to the natives of Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, etc.?

5. Please describe characteristics of New Guinea which will aid its future growth as a home for white men.

6. Was New Guinea settled by convicts?

7. Any general information of interest."—DR. LESTER H. PIERCE, Valparaiso, Ind.

Answer, by Mr. Armit:—Your letter contains several queries that an ordinary issue of *Adventure* would be unable to hold the replies to. I will briefly reply to them *seriatim* and ask you to try to get hold of some of the books mentioned in the list I enclose for the general information you are seeking.

You will not go wrong if you absorb some of the meat from these books, for each and every author in the list lived in New Guinea for years before he thought of writing. Thus you get the real thing—the actual photograph of the country through the eyes of men who had intellect sufficient properly to record their impressions of the country.

1. The natives are Melanesians. For more detailed information regarding them read "The Melanesians of British New Guinea," by Dr. C. G. Seligman.

2. Yes. A communal system that would make friend Lenin cheer with gladness. The Papuan is a blown-in-the-grass socialist, for he has no individual ownership of property—a personal estate is unknown. All goods and chattels belong to the family or clan, and the land is owned by the whole tribe. There is in some places individual ownership of land—the exception that proves the rule. The more communal the Papuan the more low and degraded a human being he is.

3. Certain tribes were cannibal. In Papua—I refer to the locality I live in—there were numerous eaters of men in the early days of this century and later. The practise is still indulged in among the far interior tribes, but it is steadily dying out as the Government pushes its influence farther afield. In the Dutch and former German sections of the great island the menu is still incomplete without a human joint.

4. Read Seligman for this information.

5. The vast central plateaux and uplands above the malarial littoral will some day provide a home for millions of white men. Fertile soil, delightful climate, minerals, metals, coal, oil, all are known to be waiting development in this area—the largest part of the Mystery Island.

6. No. Its pioneers were real men prompted by adventure.

7. Dip into the books on my list and you'll get lots of kick from the experience.

Clearing Palmetto Growth in Florida

HARDEST work in the State:

Question:—"I am much interested in a small tract of land in the south-central part of Polk County, Florida, near the county line. The nearest town is Frostproof. I am offered a share in this tract in return for improving and farming, etc., and so I would greatly appreciate your kindness in answering the following questions:

1. What is the elevation, also character, of land and of crops in this locality?

2. How does palmetto grow, and what is the usual method, also cost of clearing?

3. Does heavy rainfall seriously interfere with farming where land is low?

4. Is there work to be had for all or part of the year, in that section?

5. Where can I get maps, etc., showing this land, elevation, etc.? I know the owner's name, but no more.

I would prefer not having my name published in connection with this letter."— —— ——, Minneola, Kan.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—If the land you speak of was bought without having been seen, it is an unknown quantity. I never could understand why so many people will buy stuff they haven't seen. Sometimes, I admit, it is good land; but more often it isn't. Now to your specific questions:

1. I can not give you the exact elevation of this land, but it must be low, probably around seventy feet above sea level, perhaps less than that. The land would probably be what we here term low pine and better suited to vegetables than anything else. If your land happens to be rolling, or high pine, it would be good orange and grapefruit land.

2. Palmetto—I presume you mean the scrub variety—grows in every imaginable way—crooked, straight, perpendicular and horizontal. It is as hard as the —— to clear away. The method of clearing is to catch a dry period and burn off the land and then dig out the roots. The cost would run from $40 per acre up to $100 or more, depending upon how thick the stuff happened to be. This is the hardest work in the State!

3. Heavy rainfall should not seriously interfere with farming if the drainage ditches are open, provided the land is not *too* low.

4. Sometimes you can get work down here, and sometimes you can't. It's a hard thing to keep a line on. There are so many conditions governing it. Sometimes there are lots of workers, and sometimes there are not. Sometimes there are lots of crops to be worked, and sometimes there aren't.

5. Am not sure where you can get maps showing this land. Suppose you write the Director, U. S. Geological Survey, Washington, D. C., and ask if he has a topography map of Polk County, Fla. In my opinion, however, the only sure way to do anything with this is to go down there and see things for yourself.

Tamale Recipes

HOT stuff!

Question:—"I am not sure I have the right man; but as *Adventure* lists you in the South I thought perhaps you could tell me how to make hot tamales.

Used to get them in Spokane, at 'Bob's'; but left there two years ago on a stretcher. Recipes here are wrong somehow."—H. A. REPPLTOE, Maumee, O.

Answer, by Mr. Mahaffey:—I have received your letter of recent date with an inquiry as to how to make hot tamales, which I assume to mean chicken tamales, as there are several kinds I know of, such as Hot Tamal Hacienda, Laredo's Celeberrimo, Genuino, Farsanta, Mesa Redondo, Viajero, etc. I will give you the recipe for hacienda tamales, and if you want recipes for the others just drop me a line.

HACIENDA TAMALES

Grind two quarts of hulled corn through a meat-chopper and mix to a paste with two tablespoonfuls of melted butter, salt and cayenne pepper. Divide a large, fat chicken, and stew until tender in water containing a clove of garlic and a pinch each of salt, comino, seed and marjoram. Scald two dozen dry red chillis, remove the seeds and veins, scrape the pulp from the skin, add this to the chicken stew and thicken slightly with flour.

Shape the corn husks with scissors and soak in warm water for an hour. Fill one with the chicken stew. Before this remove the husks; dry and rub each one with hot fat. Then spread four more husks with the corn paste, fold over the one containing the chicken and roll enough more husks around to suit. Tie the ends with a strip of the husk and steam for two hours.

To prepare the corn, cover it with water, add the lime-water and boil until the husks slip off easily between the fingers, then wash in cold water until perfectly white. To prepare the lime-water add an ounce of common lime to a quart of water, stir well and let settle. When clear drain off the clear water for use. One quart of lime-water will do for a pound of corn.

HOT TAMAL

For the dough, add to one pint of cornmeal, one tablespoon each of salt and lard and enough boiling water to make a thick dough. Prepare the corn shucks as directed. For the filling boil one pound of beef and pour over it hot beef fat; cut into small bits and season with salt and chilli sauce. Put a layer of dough on a shuck, over this place a tablespoonful of prepared meat, roll like a big cigaret with a layer of dough between each shuck. Tie each end when big enough to suit and steam two hours.

Wolf-Trapping in Canada

IT'S just as much a function of the "Ask Adventure" editor to steer an inquirer away from a project as it is to help him along on one. As in this instance:

Question:—"I am a boy scout and know a great deal about the woods and I want to trap a year or so just to see the great northern woods.

Could I get an Indian guide that is any good? Would I have to pay him, or would he be my partner and tell me the nearest post next to the wolf-hunting grounds? How much would it take to get there?"—CARL TIDWELL, Clinton, Tenn.

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—Your inquiry as to wolf-trapping is, I presume, an "A. A." one. Note other side of this letter. Your plan isn't feasible for various reasons. Wolves are in the North usually poisoned rather than trapped. You'd require several hundred dollars—at least five hundred. to do what you outline.

Don't consider it.

"ASK ADVENTURE" editors are appointed with extreme care. If you can meet our exacting requirements and qualify as an expert on some topic or territory not now covered, we shall be glad to talk matters over with you. Address F. K. NOYES, *Adventure*, New York.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass.

WHILE packing up for a somewhat extended trip to the East, I came across a number of good things tucked away in the back of my desk. From them I select two, very different in type, for this issue.

The first is an American version of a very old English or Scottish ballad. It has suffered much as it has been for years passed on; the rhymes have some of them gone, and a number of verses have been lost. Those who are interested in reading a more complete text will find the story in the Kittredge and Sargent edition of "English and Scottish Popular Ballads," published by Houghton Mifflin Company, where it appears as No. 74.

Mrs. O. Mobly of Springfield, Illinois, who contributes the ballad, says, "I learned it in my early childhood when I was about seven or eight years of age, for after that time we left our country home and came into the city, among new surroundings, new songs, etc."

Lady Margaret and Sweet William

(*Text sent in by Mrs. O. Mobly*)

Lady Margaret was sitting in her high bower window
Combing her long yellow hair,
When who did she spy but Sweet William and his bride
Drawing near the hall.

She threw down her ivory comb
And tucked up her long yellow hair;
Then out of her high bower window she fell,
Never again to be there.

Sweet William and his bride drew near the hall
And gave a tinkling ring,
And no one was so ready as Lady Margaret's brother
To rise and let them in.

"Oh, is she in the kitchen,
Or is she in the hall,
Or is she in her uppermost chamber
And (her) merry maidens all?"

"She is not in the kitchen,
Or is she in the hall,
But she is in her own coffin
That lies against yonder wall."

"Oh, take away the winding sheet
And raise the coffin lid,
That I may kiss her cold clay lips,
For now they will never kiss mine."

Three times he kissed her rosy red cheeks,
Three times he kissed her chin,
Three times he kissed her clay-cold lips—
Which pierced his heart within.

Lady Margaret died on Good Friday,
Sweet William he died the morrow;
Lady Margaret died of pure true love,
Sweet William died of sorrow.

Lady Margaret was buried in the old churchyard,
Sweet William was buried by her,
And out of her grave grew a red, red rose,
And out of his a briar.

They grew and they grew in the old churchyard
Till they could not grow any higher,
And there they tied in a true love knot
And the rose wrapped round the briar.

THE second song, "Sam Bass," was sent in long ago to the Camp-Fire by Mr. Lee Herring of Astoria, Oregon, and was forwarded to the department by A. S. H. Since the text as sent in was rather incomplete, I have added two verses from the version of John Lomax in order to make the story understandable. These added verses are enclose in parentheses to distinguish them from Mr. Herring's verses.

Sam Bass

(*Text of Mr. Lee Herring*)

(Sam Bass was born in Indiana, it was his native home,
And from the age of seventeen young Sam began to roam.
Sam first came out to Texas a cowboy for to be—
A kinder-hearted fellow you seldom ever see.)

Now young Sam left the Collins ranch in the merry month of May,
With a herd of Texas cattle, the Black Hills for to see;
Sold out in Custer City, got on an awful spree—
And a tougher lot of cowboys the country never see.

In coming back from Denver they robbed the A.P. train,
They then split up in couples and started out again.
Joel Collins and his companions were overtaken soon,
And with their hard-earned money they had to meet their doom.

Sam made it back to Texas, all right side up with care,
Rode into Denton City, with all his friends to share;
But his career was short in Texas for the robberies he did do,
He held up all the passenger trains, the mail and express too.

(Sam had four companions—four bold and daring lads—
They were Richardson, Jackson, Joe Collins, and Old Dad;
Four more bold and daring cowboys the rangers never knew,
They whipped the Texas rangers and ran the boys in blue.)

Sam had another companion called "Arkansaw" for short,
He was killed by a Texas ranger by the name of Tommy Short.
Tom was a big six-footer, and thought himself very fly,
But I'll tell you on the quiet, boys, he was a dead beat on the sly.

Joe Murphy borrowed of Sam's good gold and then refused to pay,
He thought the thing for him to do was to give young Sam away;
So he sold him out both body and soul and left his friends to mourn.
Oh what a reconning Murphy will have when Gabriel blows his horn!

Sam Bass was killed at Round Rock, July the twenty-first;
They filled poor Sam with rifle balls and emptied out his purse.
And now he is dead and buried and his body turned to clay,
And Jackson is in old Mexico, and I guess it is there he will stay.

SEND all contributions of old songs, and all questions about them, direct to R. W. GORDON, 4 Conant Hall, Cambridge, Mass. DO NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

DECEMBER 30TH ISSUE

The next issue of *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

ROCKETS AT DAYBREAK A Complete Novelette *Leonard H. Nason*
"Oy!" cried *Sheehan*. "Don't shoot! Already today I been shot three times and gassed once!"

THE BLACK CUMMERBUND A Complete Novelette *Kingsley Moses*
Asa the Abyssinian wore it to its credit.

THE LANTERN ON THE COW A Complete Novelette *John Dorman*
"He was a fine hand with a boat, that Conch!"

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The Sioux lay siege to the town of New Ulm.

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He stayed in Panama after the others fled.

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The crimp business isn't what it used to be.

WHALE-SHY *James K. Waterman*
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A horse that earned its appellation.

WILD GAS *F. St. Mars*
An American skunk agitates an English countryside.

SCRAMBLED BRAINS *Alex. McLaren*
Each prospector thought the other was crazy.

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